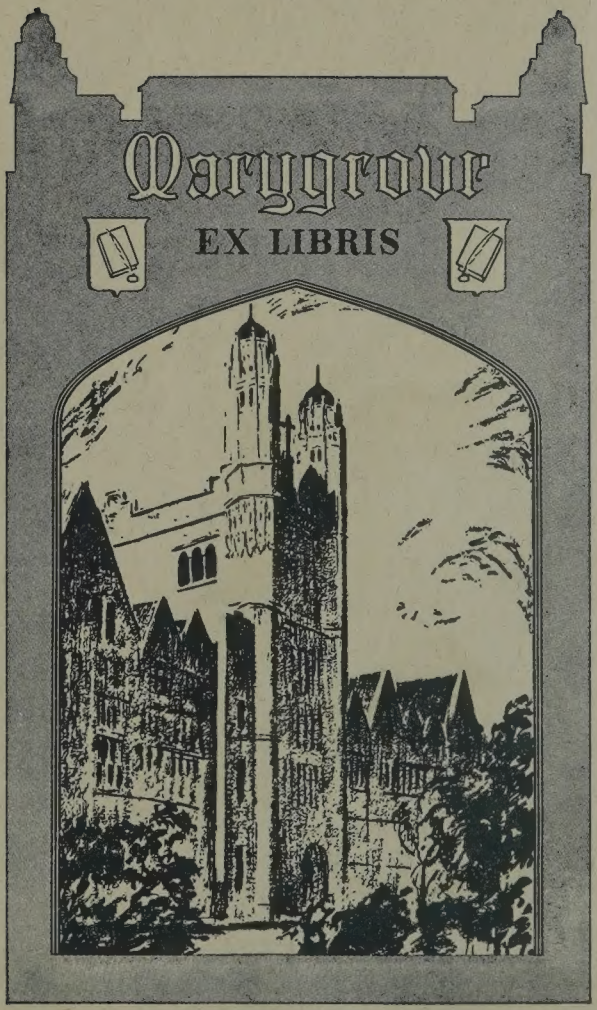

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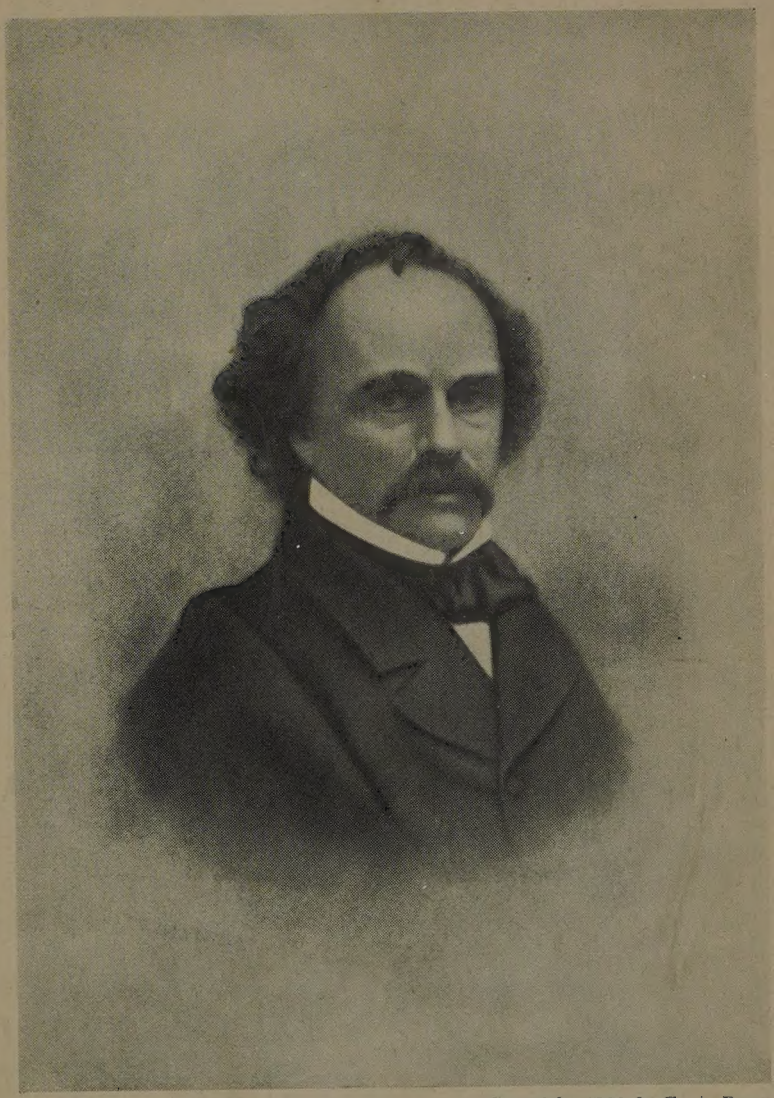
HAWTHORNE

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NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

HAWTHORNE

A Study in Solitude

By

HERBERT GORMAN



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ONCE AGAIN
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HAWTHORNE

A Study in Solitude

HAWTHORNE

CHAPTER ONE

I

BEFORE 1830 the New England scene had degenerated into a despondent and fossilized spectacle. Two hundred years of pioneering effort, of land-clearing and upbuilding in the materialistic sense, of Indian wars and revolution, and of a thin semi-bitter social coagulation had resulted in a superficially unified community that rested upon the dark foundation of the so-called Puritan tradition. This tradition, bulwarked by an intense religious dogma, was not strong enough in itself to outlast the peculiar circumstances that brought it into being. So long as ethical rules dominated the daily life of the community just so long would the tradition last as a living thing, a phenomenon not without its admirable qualities in a New World that demanded an invincible front of its conquerors; and for some years it did so last, growing, however, more dry and shell-like as the seasons succeeded one another. But with the crumbling of the religious bulwark, with the splitting apart of an heretofore unified

moral impulse, with the cessation of primitive building-up and the incursion of a more elaborate material development, with the first faint hints of commercial intercourse as possible Big Business, and with the tardy realization of the arts as forces in themselves (and how vaguely this was suspected!), the tradition was steadily undermined and its collapse became a matter of decades.

After 1830 life changed in New England. The change was gradual except for the sudden outburst of literary expression, but it grew more and more apparent as the years crept on toward the Civil War. Economic shifts followed hard upon one another and a fever of unrest that expressed itself in countless political parties and cliques and circles ran through the community. The towns grew so large that they became menaces to the country and the old scheme of existence was consequently partially demolished. A great influx of Irish immigrants streamed through the gateways of New England and with them, of course, came increased activities of the Roman Catholic Church. A state of ill-feeling which sometimes erupted in riots developed between the lower-class Protestants and these Irish. Unitarianism became the fashionable religion of the older New England families, thrusting into the background the ancient fierce and emotional Calvinism. It was Calvinism that had molded the Puritan tradition and with the desertion of it in favor of a dogma that expounded an easy optimistic faith in the inherent goodness of mankind the moral features of New England suf-

fered a sea-change. Instead of Jonathan Edwards, that curious religious sadist, bellowing that God would make blood squirt out of sinners, that He would hold them over the mouth of Hell as one holds a spider over a fire, the gentler William Ellery Channing soothed his circumspect congregation with fairer aspects.

Into this shifting and inchoate reorganization of sociological, economic, and religious urges came the writers, a sudden streaming wave of them, the vanguard of intellectual progress. The Quaker Whittier appeared first in 1831 and then in rapid succession appeared the first volume of Bancroft's "History of the United States" in 1834, Emerson's "Nature" in 1836, Hawthorne's "Twice Told Tales" in 1837, Prescott's "Ferdinand and Isabella" in 1838, and Longfellow's "Voices of the Night" in 1839. It was an auspicious flowering and it kept up without abatement until the muttering guns of the Civil War startled the minds of men into more terrible channels. There were other than material reasons for this bourgeoning of the intellectual life and one of these reasons is implicit in foreign influences. There had always been foreign influences in New England but heretofore they had come mainly from England. Now they came from Spain, from France, and, especially, from Germany. Then, too, a new race of scholars had sprung into existence, men who had traveled and knew whereof they spoke, men who had grown up, perhaps, in the Puritan tradition not much questioning it during their early years but now acutely aware of it because

of its very weakening. It is true that a man may live intimately with a scene for ages and not be too aware of it because it is so much a part of the air he breathes and the life he absorbs through all his faculties; then, when this scene is shaken by the incursion of foreign urges, the native suddenly becomes aware of his environment and is moved to speculations concerning its adjuncts and drawbacks. The present becomes a perspective against which he may set the past. He has a standard for comparison. So the intelligent New Englander after 1830 could (vaguely and, at times, subconsciously) see the multifarious aspects of his environment and seize upon them for that rather mellow and innocuous but demonstrable ratiocination that lay clutched in the chaste arms of morality at the bottom of the cool and contemplative lake of his native literature. After 1830 the New Englander stumbled upon the history of his own mind's development and revealed it both consciously and unconsciously in a gathering flood of books.

II

Literature for New England ceased to be almost wholly a matter of piracy from England. It is true that for some time the publishers continued to steal the books of the Mother Country with a fine Puritanical abandonment, but a thin stream of native products trickled through these foreign works, a stream that steadily widened and became, before long, a river important in itself and furnishing some degree of sustenance to the country adjacent to its

limpid current. Men and women in the smaller as well as the larger towns found a satisfaction of the mind in these native works for they as well as the authors were riding this current of new endeavors. Though the material birth of New England had taken place two centuries before accompanied by more or less severe pains it was not until this era whose advent is set at 1830 (although this is an arbitrary date, for all eras overlap) that the literary birth of New England may be affirmed to have taken place. In the quiet parlors of hundreds of substantial homes calm-eyed women and politically-excited men were turning over pages fresh from the presses of Boston and New York. An activity, not toö feverish, to be sure, animated the literary phenomena of the times. It would be pleasant now to pass into one of those old-fashioned homes slumbering in the sun beneath its huge shade-tree and partake of the atmosphere of the period, to talk for a moment with the inmates about the lamentable riot in Boston between the firemen and the Irish and the subsequent calling-out of the militia, for instance, or Washington Allston's paintings that were so much better than the work of Michael Angelo, or Mr. Emerson's latest lecture, or the newly-arrived bundle of books, or some vexed aspect of the religious problems of the day. But this is impossible. Some of these old houses still exist but their inhabitants are almost as far from us to-day as Caesar and his Legions or Washington's Continentals. There is nothing but the galvanized corpse of a tradition that twitches infrequently, some crumbling

edifices about which Time has wrapped a faint historical aroma, a few pictures and wood cuts out of which peer strange and calm eyes, and a bundle of books and letters and diaries left to remind us that between 1830 and the Civil War New England passed through a flowering era of rather circumspect literary gentility.

One man stands both in and aside from this genteel flowering. He was unquestionably a part of it but he was so unlike his contemporaries as to fit into no groove. He was neither of the Concord group although he lived there for a while nor of the Cambridge group although he called some of them his friends. He cannot be classified as a Transcendental although he was intimate with the leaders of that foggy idealism. He was a man whose mood was essentially dark, who was visited by small daemons, who was haunted by spectres, who saw in Time the horrors of eternity and yet who, in himself, was a dull, shy, quiet relic of iron-minded Puritan forebears. We may approach him through the alert mind of Miss Elizabeth Peabody of Salem, Massachusetts. In 1837 that strong-minded young lady happened upon a small book called "Twice Told Tales," published by the American Stationers' Company, Boston, read it from cover to cover, recognized some of the narratives as matter that had arrested her attention before in the columns of the New England Magazine (indeed, she had written, but never sent, a letter to the "supposed old man" responsible for them) and discovered (for Miss Peabody appears to have been a ubiquitous

"educated" lady) that the mysterious scribbler was Madame Hawthorne's son. Now Madame Hawthorne's son lived very near Miss Peabody in an old house on Herbert Street, but propinquity of residence proved no particular aid to access. It was a year before Madame Hawthorne's son, accompanied by his two sisters, was inveigled into a visit to the Peabody house. He was a painfully shy young man almost antagonistic because of an acute realization of his accursed bashfulness. Miss Peabody thought him handsomer than Lord Byron. What he thought of her is not on record. Upstairs the invalid sister of Miss Elizabeth Peabody kept to her chamber and refused to come down even though the visitor were handsomer than Lord Byron. This sister, Sophia by name, had suffered from headaches for years. The visit ended on a better note than it began for Madame Hawthorne's son lost some of his shyness as the conversation proceeded and his two sisters, Elizabeth and Louisa, proved agreeable enough. At the conclusion of the call the young man and his two sisters directed their steps toward home, toward Madame Hawthorne's house on Herbert Street. With them walked the ghosts of old New England.

III

Nathaniel Hawthorne walked arm in arm with solitude. During the later years of his life when public offices and his fame had forced him somewhat into the world of affairs and friendships he ceased

to lead an hermit-like existence. But even in the jolliest gatherings he was an hermit appearing in public. There was a difference between him and those friends of his who enjoyed laudation and the social amenities. The sweet urbanity of Longfellow, the gentle friendliness of Emerson, the vivid argumentativeness of Margaret Fuller, these things were not for Hawthorne. He could meet these people and talk with some degree of animation, he could attend dinners and literary gatherings and business conferences, he could frequent taverns and wharves, he could administrate a consular office, he could travel through England and France and Italy; all these things he could do and yet it was impossible for him to appear anywhere without the impalpable specter of solitude fondly hanging to his arm. It has been asserted by people who ought to know that Hawthorne's withdrawal from the world has been over-emphasized and in a physical sense this is undoubtedly so. He did see people and go about. He was disposed in a friendly enough fashion to the world around him. Yet in the spiritual sense his withdrawal from the world has not been over-emphasized. He was never a part of the social surface of his environment although the roots of his personality sank deeper into that environment, perhaps, than those of any of the more vivid figures of the period. From one point of view he was nearer Jonathan Edwards than Ellery Channing and yet he was not actually a Puritan of the old type. But the somberness of the ancient Puritans stayed with him as a dark cloak through all his days

and though it was often lightened by an intelligence quite aware of the fairer vistas of existence, these brief illuminations were not sufficient to dissipate the aura of dusk that clung about him so tenaciously. His early inclinations, his literary gift to the very last, and the essential timbre of his mentality were tinged with an autumn hue. There were obvious reasons for this and the two principal ones were his life to maturity and for some years beyond, and the hampering power over his intelligence of Puritanism, Calvinism, and tradition.

The mature man is always the child of his youth to some degree. During those early formative years that approach puberty and extend beyond it for some time the nervous processes of the youth are shaping the quality and measure of the intelligence. It was so in the case of Hawthorne. His youth and early manhood were passed in such surroundings that he was flung directly into the arms of solitude. A naturally sensitive temperament was withdrawn from the world by an impossible arrangement of days. He saw solitude sitting beside his curious mother and dogging the steps of his two reticent sisters. He found solitude in the lonely byways he walked, on the midnight expanse of Lake Sebago where he skated across the pale ice in the moonlight, and in the haunted chamber under the eaves on Herbert Street where he pored over old Puritan chronicles and learned of the Salem witches. His imagination, fostered in such silence, lifted the gray wings of the moth and circled about this native Salem of his where his forefathers had dwelt for

so many decades. He lived in the Past, as it were, and the Past is, after all, a solitary place peopled only with ghosts. Flung so upon himself he grew reticent but not morose, shy but not *gauche,* for the elements of the gentleman were born in him. Then, aiding and abetting this instinct for solitude, were the looming wraiths of Puritanism, Calvinism and tradition. Hawthorne did not move out from their shadow until it was too late in life and then his days became an uncertain rebellion against them. He carried an abiding realization of his descent and his blood-relationship with the old Salem Hawthornes and though he knew that he was quite unlike them and that they probably would have snorted a bit at him yet he understood only too well that their huge shadows hung over his days.

It has been pointed out that life changed in New England after 1830 and that a new race of writers was the direct result of the crumbling scene. Hawthorne was of these new writers (he could not have existed as a force before 1830) and yet he was not like them. He, alone, of the New England group came from a home that had been absolutely untouched by the new spirit in the air. It was both his fortune and his misfortune to drink more deeply the essential spirit of the old Puritan tradition than any of the others, Longfellow, Emerson, Thoreau, Lowell, or Holmes. These men were all in the current of daily life, moving along with it at greater or lesser speed, while Hawthorne was sitting in his room in Salem and fashioning tales out of old chronicles. He was therefore maladjusted to the

urbane talkative Cambridge and Concord men, and though they respected him none of them ever got very close to him. It was impossible because he was a figure who had drunk at more solitary springs. Hawthorne was vaguely at odds with this old spirit that had watched over his youth but he did not possess the requisite pugnacity to fight quite clear of it. He was never quite sure of his own strength. He felt the past stretching out at him like a ghostly hand to be placed on his shoulder. The sense of this past, therefore, informed most of his work. While Longfellow, for instance, was ransacking the romantic stores of Europe Hawthorne was lifting skeletons from the old Puritan annals and clothing them in a shadowy flesh. While Emerson was preaching his great new doctrine of spiritual and intellectual self-reliance Hawthorne was remolding the old Puritan sense of the burden of sin with an artistic delicacy almost foreign to the contemporary scene. And while Thoreau was seeking in nature by the silent waters of Walden Pond the desirable simplifications of life, Hawthorne was clothing the dim figments of ancient New England ghosts and "essences" with the suave cloaks of his shadowy meditations. In one sense of the word he was not of the New England Renaissance. He was not a part of that gallant and contained group who thrust open the long closed doors into an unprejudiced life that was unridden by semi-defunct tradition. He hardly ever stepped outside of himself as Emerson did or became an epitome in himself of the new Simple Man, the Rousseau *de nos jours,* as Thoreau.

Instead of this, he shut himself in with his soul "and the shapes came eddying forth." But in another sense of the word he did belong to this Renaissance of the mind in New England. He, like the others, succeeded in regarding his environment with a certain degree of objectivity. The historical sense was fecund in him and he could take the burden of the Puritan (and what was that burden but the omnipresent sense of man's inborn sinfulness) and examine it with a semi-detached aesthetic interest. He was the foremost artist of his day if we consider him from this point of view, more natural than Poe if not so bold and thoroughly capable of comprehending the aesthetic nuances of the material which he shaped so patiently.

IV

One must travel back in Time to find the real Nathaniel Hawthorne and yet this journey will discover no more than a few frightful ghosts, a greater number of inconsequential phantoms, and the spent luster of a scene that reflects a comfortless sun shining through biting autumn weather. The locale is Salem always, a Salem of ferocious urges that quickly spend themselves, a Salem that becomes a long drab vista of unsightly houses and rusty people. Hawthorne was born in this New England town on the Fourth of July, 1804, as Henry James declared, "on the day on which of all days in the year the great Republic enjoys her acutest fit of self-consciousness." Hawthorne was hardly self-

conscious at his birth but it is obvious that he grew self-conscious as to his place in life and the reason for his birth in after-years. The frowning shadow of his ancestors permeated his youth and early manhood, and, indeed, haunted him to the end of his life. To understand him one must understand these ancestors. They were the dark shadowed spring of icy water out of which rose the coldly delicate flower that was Hawthorne's mind. At the same time one must not overestimate the influence of these vanished progenitors on the writer, for though he was blood of their blood and bone of their bone it is a matter of perplexed and complicated argument to assert that he was brain of their brain. As a matter of fact he was not. Hawthorne reached that plane in the progress of a family where he could observe his ancestors detachedly.

The first of these ancestors was Major William Hathorne (it was Nathaniel Hawthorne himself who introduced the W into the name although the pronunciation remained unchanged) and he appears in New England history about 1630. He was the typical Puritan of the period, a fighter of Indians and a persecutor of Quakers. Like all typical Puritans he became a magistrate. Nathaniel Hawthorne pictured him in the introduction to "The Scarlet Letter." "The figure of that first ancestor, invested by family tradition with a dim and dusky grandeur, was present to my boyish imagination as far back as I can remember. It still haunts me, and induces a sort of home-feeling with the past, which I scarcely claim in reference to the present, phase

of the town. I seem to have a stronger claim to a residence here on account of this grave, bearded, sable-cloaked and steeple-crowned progenitor—who came so early, with his Bible and his sword, and trod the unworn street with such a stately port, and made so large a figure as a man of war and peace—a stronger claim than for myself, whose name is seldom heard and my face scarcely known. He was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the church; he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil. He was likewise a bitter persecutor, as witness the Quakers, who have remembered him in their histories, and relate an incident of his hard severity towards a woman of their sect which will last longer, it is to be feared, than any of his better deeds, though these were many."

If this man (who died in 1681) was fierce, his son, John, was even fiercer for that worthy comes down through history as one of the witch persecutors. The witchcraft delusion hangs like a pall over early Puritan chronicles and somewhere in that pall a small daemon (perhaps the one at which Martin Luther flung his ink bottle) laughs shrilly. It was the last madness of Puritanism, the complete orgy of a sin-crazed conscience. To understand the Puritan conscience, to comprehend from what unyielding iron it was forged, to realize the *reductio ad absurdum* of fanaticism, one must acquaint oneself with the Salem witch trials. It is an unbelievable dip back into the medieval age, perhaps even the Black Age, and it illustrates only too clearly how close religious exultation is to complete mad-

ness, how faith may be translated into mad delusion, and how often dogmatic conviction becomes bloody tyranny. Gallows Hill in Salem is the Golgotha from whence come streaming all the spearmen of intolerant American reform. The men who put the nooses about the necks of the distraught "witches" were the progenitors of the more sly and less stark prophets of prohibitions who bluster through American life to-day. Hawthorne, in his day, recognized the curse of intolerance and it is manifested more than once in his own writings. Even his family was supposed to labor under a malediction directed upon it by one of Colonel John Hathorne's witch victims. Whether or not there was an historic curse it is obvious that after the civic prominence of the first two Hawthornes, William and John, the family subsided into the completest silence and obscurity. They became a race of seafarers, skippers of merchant vessels and whalers, and this vocation continued down to the time of Nathaniel Hawthorne's father, another Nathaniel, who died of fever in Surinam in 1808 when the future novelist was but four years old.

It would be an easy matter to indulge in all sorts of suppositions regarding the influence of Hawthorne's family upon him. However, the main inferences may be stated in a very few sentences. Hawthorne's hereditary endowment included, first of all, an obsession with the influence of conscience on character. It adumbrated sin as a vital essence to be combatted wherever possible, and, curiously enough, Hawthorne, like his ancestors (although in

a different and more objective way) was fascinated by the aspect of sin. It lurked in the back of his mind and forced its way constantly into his fictions. Whether it was the unforgivable sin of Ethan Brand or the scarlet letter of Hester Prynne or the ghost of old Maule hovering over the House of the Seven Gables or the murder festering in Donatello's faun-like soul it was always present as a dark elixir imbuing its victims with a wild life that was somehow outside of life. Together with this consciousness of sin went a fastidiousness that bordered on squeamishness. Hawthorne, for instance, disapproved mightily of nude statues and who can affirm that this is not a throwback to that old Puritanical point of view that regards the body, first of all, as the potential house of evil? So far as Hawthorne's inclination for solitude went it must be considered as almost overwhelmingly due to his immediate environment, his home which was conducted as few homes have ever been conducted and his locale which bound him to it only through ghostly connections with the past. These questions may be taken up in their proper order. His hereditary temperament, of course, played some part in this leaning toward solitude, for the Puritan mind was far from a social mind and its ubiquitous urge was decidedly limited. But the case of Hawthorne was unusual and he can hardly be regarded as a type.

The early years of the boy offer a curious study in family morbidity. After the death of Captain Hawthorne at Surinam Madame Hawthorne (she was born Elizabeth Clark Manning) withdrew from

the world in the fullest meaning of the word. She shut herself up in the Herbert Street house with her three children and in so doing shut the world away from these children when they most needed it. It is true that the earlier years of confinement did not prove too onerous. While Madame Hawthorne sat in her chamber like the mourning widow of an Indian rajah her children played and had some schooling. Hawthorne himself read "The Faery Queene," "Pilgrim's Progress," some of Scott, and the usual inept school books of the period. He went to school. He was taught by Dr. Joseph Worcester, the lexicographer. He played with other children. Elizabeth Peabody remembered playing with him when he was a small boy. In 1813, when he was nine years old, he injured his foot while playing ball and it was several years before he recovered fully and was able to fling his crutches away. During these years of convalescence he fed to the full on the loneliness of his home, a home where the inmates did not live but merely existed as silent growths in an almost-vacuum. It is easy to recapture the "feel" of this shadowy house. In one chamber Madame Hawthorne, still in her early thirties, sat, her life having passed away beneath the hot sun of Surinam. In another chamber the quiet daughters reposed. And in still another chamber the lame boy lingered, turning the pages of books, drinking in the essence of silence, and growing more and more like the owl that loves darkness best of all. Outside the cold sun filtered through the heavy branches of the ancient trees above the

deserted town street. The ugly white houses pushed abjectly against Time and got nowhere at all. In the harbor a creaking schooner unloaded firewood from Nova Scotia. The men abroad walked slowly. Birds twittered in the trees. The peaceful and despondent end of an era was slowly, almost slumberously, drawing to a close.

Later when Hawthorne was fourteen years old the family removed to Raymond, Maine, where they dwelt in "Manning's Folly," the home of Robert Manning, one of Madame Hawthorne's brothers. Near by was Lake Sebago and about this quiet expanse of water the boy, now recovered from his injury, wandered. It was here and at this time, according to Hawthorne himself, that he first got his "cursed habits of solitude." It is to be suspected, however, that these habits had already been planted and that only at this time did they begin to sprout noticeably. The young boy does not notice how cut off he is from the world as much as the older boy who feels the need of comradeship, as curiosity and an urge for conversation boil up within his mind. Hawthorne had been to Raymond before, had gone there during early summers and played beneath the trees, but now he was on the verge of the thinking state and he could better observe the effects of his environment. As he skated by night over the still, icy bosom of Lake Sebago, the steel blades of his skates cutting through the forlorn and desolate silence, he had an opportunity to set himself against the world and compare himself with those few acquaintances he had already made.

The comparison (and it probably did not delve very deeply for, after all, the boy was still but a boy) may not have been odious but it could have presented but few enchanting aspects. What was he, after all? He was the only son of a morbidly-minded widow of a sea-captain. His household was composed entirely of women except when he visited, or was visited by, his uncles. His time was passed between a lonely house in a rather sad New England seaport from whence the greater bulk of ocean-traffic had fled to the more important ports of Boston or New Bedford or Newburyport and a somewhat primitive Maine town that was still, to all intents and purposes, an outpost of civilization. The enormous cultural awakening of New England hardly permeated these corners. Boston might be active with young men about to break clear of an old tradition but Salem was still the town of the witches and Raymond was practically on the edge of nowhere.

When Hawthorne returned to his native town after a season of the loneliness of Raymond the habit of solitude was indelibly impressed upon his nature. He was unused to the common contact of men, to the daily give and take of personalities, to the excitement of conversation. He was too young to be unhappy at such a predicament and his natural somberness of mood (which appears to have been more of a thoughtful gravity than anything else) sustained him as a solitary being. Even the return to school did not lighten him materially. He was of a reflective disposition (as many sensitive boys

are) and his chief enjoyment was undoubtedly occasioned by the long tramps through the outskirts of Salem, wanderings which quickened his fancy and opened his eyes to the natural beauties and delicacies of the New England landscape. He saw with a brooding eye, and his Puritan heritage endowed the things he saw with faint moralistic adumbrations. If this was a new world about him he did not see it as such. It was not so much a civilized seaboard snatched from the impenetrable miles of wilderness as an autumn-hued terrain across which swept the crown-hatted and square-shoed ghosts of an earlier era. The rolling voice of William Hathorne ordering that Anne Coleman and four of her Quaker friends be whipped through Salem, Boston, and Dedham sounded in the salty sea-breezes that swept through the streets of the boy's native town. John Hathorne holding court for the hysteric witches and their epileptic victims was an omnipresent specter. There was a distant roll of drums, a whispering of women in the side-lanes, the Black Man waiting in the dark forest clearing for the unholy Sabaoth, the ugly skeleton of the pillory, and, above all, the unsightly fruit hanging from the gibbet on Gallows Hill. These things were undoubtedly in the boy's mind as he completed his primary schooling and bethought himself of the new college in Brunswick, Maine, to which he was to go for that finishing process which was to make an acceptable New Englander of him. But he was not to be an acceptable New Englander, after all, for an underlying independence (fortified to some extent by his

solitude) held him above what was already a perishing mass-movement. He was to go his own way unmindful of the gentle cultural urge of New England, and yet, curiously enough, an unwitting exponent of it.

V

Hawthorne entered Bowdoin College in 1821 when he was seventeen years old. It was a wilderness college, a new venture set somewhat daringly against a background of primitive nature. Across the Androscoggin the lumber mills squealed and bellowed and the huge logs shot down the sluices into the river. The modest buildings upreared themselves doggedly against the huge blizzards that swept down from the north, and the little group of students huddled in the insufficiently heated halls and strove as best they might to swallow the druggets of knowledge prepared for them by the somewhat limited professors. It would be an interesting enough matter to go into the atmosphere of Bowdoin in 1821 with some degree of thoroughness but it is hardly necessary to do so here for it is difficult to perceive that the college influenced Hawthorne in any impressive way. As a matter of fact he kept pretty much to himself, was no more than a fair scholar, and formed but two friendships that were of any importance to him in later life. Longfellow was a college-mate but the connection between the two men who were to loom largest in New England creative literature during their era appears to have been rather fragile. Hawthorne,

after all, was not cut from the material of which social undergraduates are made. He was too much on his own, too much of a solitary thinker, and a little too independent for the fastidious youths who composed the "upper set" at Bowdoin. Longfellow might be the dapper young man already convinced of a great future for himself but Hawthorne was more likely to be fined for playing cards at Ward's Tavern or cutting his classes to wander through the surrounding woods. He was not of the urbane academic type and scholarship for its own sake did not appeal to him. It is true that he wrote some verse but that is best forgotten. It was extraordinarily bad verse.

Hawthorne's two particular friends at Bowdoin were Franklin Pierce, later to be President of the United States (perhaps the greatest nonentity who ever became President and that is saying a great deal) and Horatio Bridge. To Bridge, Hawthorne wrote later in an introduction to "The Snow Image": "If anybody is responsible at this day for my being an author, it is yourself. I know not whence your faith came; but while we were lads together at a country college—gathering blueberries in study-hours under those tall Academic pines; or watching the great logs as they tumbled along the current of the Androscoggin; or shooting pigeons and gray squirrels in the woods; or bat-fowling in the summer twilight; or catching trout in that shadowy little stream which, I suppose, is still wandering riverward through the forest—though you and I will never cast a line in it again—two idle lads,

in short (as we need not fear to acknowledge now), doing a hundred things the Faculty never heard of, or else it had been worse for us—still it was your prognostic of your friend's destiny that he was to be a writer of fiction." These lines would appear to give a fairly accurate picture of Hawthorne's life at college, a life passed more in the pursuit of diversion than of culture. Although he was quiet and in love with solitude it was not the quietude and silence of the study hall that appealed to him. Rather was it the interrupted silence of the forest while one friend trudged beside him and prognosticated a future of literary eminence for him. That shadowy rebellion against "form" as it was understood in the New England social circle of the 1820s was working like a yeast in Hawthorne. The infraction of rules was a matter of small moment to him because he was self-centered in his solitude. He did not consider himself a part of the life of the day although he walked through it with a shy urbanity. Something called in the distance and perhaps it was literature, but a faintness of virile struggle and an unconscious self-deprecation withheld him from those dominant gestures that might be supposed to forward him on the road to fame. He had lived too long by himself and was too familiar with silence. He could not break free from his essential spiritual loneliness. And yet the pen was already in his hand.

The personal habits of Hawthorne during these college years remains a matter of shadowy conjecture. It is a fact that he played cards for money

and was fined for so doing. It is also obvious that he drank wine and even stronger liquor but in an era when all men drank to some extent there is nothing unusual about this. He was an excellent student in English and it is possible that "Fanshawe," his first romance, was germinating in his mind during these undergraduate years. Perhaps it was the discussion of this book and a draft of a portion of it that aroused in Bridge the encouraging prophecy of Hawthorne's future as an author of fiction. He appears to have taken no part in the religious argumentations of the time (as Longfellow did, for instance) but to have pursued a somewhat lonely way outside of the pale of formalized dogma. We may picture him as a lithe handsome boy, moody of temperament, quiet but sure in humor, uneasy in large gatherings, regardless of regulations, hesitant of putting himself forward in any particular way and yet endowed with a thin steel-like independence. His reserved nature prevented him from making many friends, and, indeed, the bulwark of friends was quite unnecessary to his peculiar cast of individuality. He had no use for them as a general rule. He could not dissipate himself in social amenities. Longfellow, for instance, made friends right and left and these intimates proved a tower of strength to the poet in later years; but though sensitive and understanding personalities might desire to give themselves more fully to Hawthorne and to receive something in return the Salem recluse could not meet them in the broad sunlight. One or two might walk the shad-

owy way with him but a congenital reticence debarred Hawthorne from surrounding himself with those many admirers who might have aided him so much during that decade that followed upon his departure from Bowdoin. The truth was that Hawthorne was already—during these college years—walking in that shadowy borderland between this world and the world of his fancy. To all intents and purposes, he was Fanshawe, Fanshawe the pale student who with one stern look and a short, "Retire, Sir!" could discomfit the villain, Fanshawe who could save the woman he loved from the clutches of a scoundrel and then calmly turn her over to a rival, Fanshawe who burned the midnight oil and died at the early age of twenty. Hawthorne, it is to be suspected, romanticized himself a bit from the very first and yet in so vague and delicate a fashion that it is difficult to perceive where romanticization left off and reality began. All imaginative men romanticize themselves to some extent and Hawthorne, conscious at last of his own peculiar solitude, must have dwelt upon it with an increasing moodiness as the years immediately following the Bowdoin interlude passed along, each one more subdued and doleful than the last.

The seasons at college, therefore, were but an interim of tentative associations between two silences. A few friends were made, were, indeed, grappled to his soul with hoops of steel, but the nature of the man did not change. Hawthorne was in no whit drawn out of himself by his education. If anything he was thrust deeper into his own loneliness.

The awareness of literature was, indeed, an added bulwark against the loud, changing, outer world that was shifting its moorings so insensibly at first and so disconcertingly later on. For Hawthorne the world meant not so much a career as a return to the disconsolate, ghost-ridden house on Herbert Street where he was to sit in a haunted chamber under the eaves and meditate on a vague future for a decade or more. The virility of youth seemed lacking from his makeup. He did not desire to dash out into the world and seize Time by the forelock. He would sit by the wayside (and later he was to call one of his homes 'The Wayside') and let the world go by. Longfellow was to cross the seas and study Europe but Hawthorne was to return on the beaten track and study the old-fashioned town where his forefathers had dwelt and ruled with rods of iron. It was a gloomy and dubious aspect induced by lack of aggressiveness, pinched financial means, and a wondering uncertainty.

VI

The return to Salem in 1825 was like a return to the tomb. Hawthorne was morbidly concerned about his future and he sat down to think about it. Year after year he kept on considering what he was fit for and year after year the pen in his hand grew more active and, almost like a somnambulist, he entered upon his career without knowing it. Though he imagined his footsteps to be imprinted not upon the earth but upon the air he was, from the first,

walking that oblique devious way through life which he was to pursue all his days. The tomb that had closed upon him after his few years of freedom at Brunswick could not stifle his imagination and his fancy. Though his mother, garmented in antique costumes, might sit solemnly in her high chamber and scorn any intercourse with her relations, though the two daughters, Elizabeth and Louisa, might drift to their private rooms and there immerse themselves in their own strange commerce with life, though Hawthorne himself might hide like a mole in his study by day and take his solitary walks after the darkness had fallen over Salem, the budding writer was already fumbling his way forward. No sooner was he home from college than he began the "Seven Tales of My Native Land," a series of stories which he was to burn later, and "Fanshawe," the curious novelette which he privately published in 1828 and the copies of which he searched out almost immediately after publication for the purpose of destroying them. He was a born writer but he had no confidence in himself. He saw life in terms of the imagination and his solitude developed this imagination along a triple course that was most natural to the anchorite. In the first place this imagination seized upon chronicles for its inspiration. Having no particular knowledge of man as he lived in a modern milieu Hawthorne turned to the historical memorials of his native land. A brooding over moral problems grew up with this aptitude toward revitalizing dead things. And that observance of life from the outside which

is so often the peculiar property of the solitary evinced itself in the sketches of fancy.

For a number of years now Hawthorne's life was to follow a steady and uninterrupted course. He studied in the morning, wrote in the afternoon, and read in the evening as a general rule. He made few friends and he did not encourage callers. After the fall of darkness he would sometimes wander forth. Occasionally he would pass the evening playing cards and drinking in the kitchen of Susan Ingersoll's house on Turner Street, together with such acquaintances as Horace Conolly and David Roberts. What did he think of this Salem which had shaped his young mind? Well, not much. He thought he "might as well develop an affection for a checkerboard as this disarranged pattern of ugly wooden houses." Yet a feeling of intimacy persisted in spite of his evident coldness of observance. Salem was the home of his fathers and their dust had become a part of the soil beneath his feet. The blood and bones of vanished Hawthornes were a portion of this quiet town on the edge of the great sea and therefore it was, in a measure, a part of Nathaniel Hawthorne himself. His cold affection for his native town he called "the sensuous sympathy of dust for dust" and there was a deep subtlety in the phrase. He had a home feeling for the past and as the past glimmered up at him out of the heavy tomes he brought to the chamber under the eaves on Herbert Street he experienced that strange mystic feeling that destiny had fastened his roots in the secret soil where the bones of the

witches were long since dust. "The old wooden houses, the mud and dust, the dead level of site and sentiment, the chill east wind, and the chilliest of social atmospheres" held and compelled him implacably and his "strange, indolent, unjoyous attachment" was not to be broken through life. Here, if anywhere, the mysteries of sin and tortured conscience and the old Puritan earnestness of concern might strike with a peculiarly vivid fastidiousness upon his artistic consciousness. During the decade or more that he lived for the most part in Salem it was not so much a passion that held Hawthorne stationary as it was the desolate sense that he had nowhere else to go and that his faith either in himself or in the reciprocity of the public was enervated by a hundred and one doubts.

So he idled by the wayside of life very much like a sleeper so far as any energetic actions were concerned. Occasionally he would wander forth by day but mainly in twilight and once a year he would make a trip of some weeks' duration. He was intimate with the neighboring towns, Nahant, Ipswich, Danvers, and he gravitated toward the taverns, perhaps because he found there that unrestricted and natural effervescence of life that was not to be sought out in the more staidly social gatherings of the day. In Boston he knew the Maverick House, the City Tavern, and the Mechanics' Hotel, for instance, and the taste of hot punch was not strange to him. During these days the inborn inclinations for an aesthetic satisfaction crept into his mind and colored his thoughts albeit their mani-

festations were weak and almost choked by the Puritan heritage that Time had vouchsafed him. He meditated on the grossness of pigs and their lack of beauty, for instance, as he passed a muddy sty, whereas another New Englander would have remarked no more than the possible number of pounds of meat in the swine. Seeing three little girls wading in a stream he instinctively protested at the sight of their unlovely pantalets. On his way to Nahant he searched in vain for a beautiful face amongst the passing pedestrians. He was quick to discern the flaws in people, over-dressed dandies at the Boston hotels, for instance, with worn-out soles to their shoes. All this while he meditated on life and scribbled his secret thoughts, his experiments in composition, and his ideas for possible short tales in his voluminous note-books. "The world is so sad and solemn," he noted, "that things meant in jest are liable, by an overpowering influence, to become dreadful earnest,—gayly dressed fantasies turning to ghostly and black-clad images of themselves." He fashioned four precepts for himself: to break off customs, to shake off spirits ill-disposed, to meditate on youth, and to do nothing against one's genius. He never did break off customs although he did manage to view them with some degree of detachment. The ill-disposed spirits haunted his to his grave. His meditations on youth were autumnal in hue and garmented in none of that bright glancing luster that might have leavened his dusky gravity. And he did do things against his genius, things induced mainly by pecuniary necessity

as when he became a customs official and so silenced his imagination for several years, or because of friendship as when he wrote his life of Franklin Pierce. But during these early years he followed the still path of meditation and permitted it to lead him wheresoever it chose. Life became a severe monotony. "We sometimes congratulate ourselves at the moment of waking from a troubled dream," he noted in his persistent diary, "it may be so the moment after death." Life was a dream to him but not too much troubled until enough of his stories had appeared in periodicals to arouse him to an active sense of the great outer world that cried about his ivory tower. Then, as the 1830s gathered speed, a depression settled upon Hawthorne. He knew that he must go out into the world and yet he knew not how to go. He suspected a faithless public as many a young writer suspected it before him and has suspected it since. Though his friend, Horatio Bridge, might insist on telling him how good he was and strive valiantly to dissuade him from morbid frames of mind the rainy weather continued in his spirit.

From 1830 on he contributed his short sketches and tales to a few magazines, but these apparent bits of thistledown settled on stony soil so far as Hawthorne could see. The fame which he won in his dismal chamber was extraordinarily limited and yet he did have a small audience by 1837, one or two editors interested in him, and, for his own part, some degree of awareness of his powers. He desired to have a book published but the obstacles

Fate flung in his way were many and it was not until Horatio Bridge guaranteed the publishers against loss that "Twice Told Tales" was issued by the American Stationers' Company in 1837. For a year or two before that Hawthorne had some degree of intimate relationship with the journalistic world. S. G. Goodrich, known to New England readers of that era as Peter Parley, had been one of Hawthorne's first friends among magazine editors. He was a promoter of hack writings and the editor of "The Token", a periodical in which some of Hawthorne's first stories appeared. As early as 1830 he had tried to find a publisher for a projected book by the Salem recluse to be called "Provincial Tales," a venture which never materialized. In 1836 he procured for Hawthorne the editorship of a small magazine rejoicing in the astoundingly long name of "The American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge." The periodical lasted a few months and then blew up as such ventures generally do and Hawthorne was out the greater part of his salary. After working off some irritation at Goodrich, Hawthorne, aided by his sister, Elizabeth, put together "Peter Parley's Universal History on the Basis of Geography" for the busy editor and received as a reward the sum of one hundred dollars. The book sold into millions. All of this was most unsatisfactory and Hawthorne, obviously pinched for money, grew more and more depressed. By this time he was thirty-three years old and except for some scattered tales he had nothing to show for the seasons of meditation and voluminous scribbling in

the Herbert Street house. Longfellow was already a professor at Harvard, a man who had explored Europe and published several books. The rest of Hawthorne's Bowdoin classmates were moving along with the Time Spirit. Franklin Pierce was a Senator and Jonathan Cilley was a member of Congress. Hawthorne alone sat by the wayside of life, "like a man under enchantment," and the thicket of obscurity grew up about him and hid the world from him and him from the world. To Horatio Bridge he poured out his depression, calling himself "a doomed man." It is a curious spectacle, this of Hawthorne actually too inactive to push his own way and yet bewailing his lot. Whether or not he expected the world to come to him and batter down the closed door of the Herbert Street house is a riddle. It is obvious, however, that he made no vigorous gestures on his own part.

Friends, nevertheless, were about to thrust Hawthorne into that rather weak limelight that was to be his reward until the great days of "The Scarlet Letter," and first among them was the faithful Bridge who made possible the "Twice Told Tales." This book was published at a psychological moment for Hawthorne who had been drooping despondently over his miserable fortune. Longfellow, already secure in the adulation of the Cambridge group, was quick to give his old classmate a helping hand by a review that was much more laudatory than critical and the Salem hermit was thus somewhat prodded out of his somber thicket. To Longfellow, shortly before the review appeared, Haw-

thorne had revealed himself curiously, writing: "By some witchcraft or other—for I really cannot assign any reasonable why and wherefore—I have been carried apart from the main current of life, and find it impossible to get back again. Since we last met, which you remember was in Sawtell's room, where you read a farewell poem to the relics of the class,—ever since that time I have secluded myself from society; and yet I never meant any such thing, nor dreamed what sort of life I was going to lead. I have made a captive of myself, and put me into a dungeon, and now I cannot find the key to let myself out." And again: "For the last ten years, I have not lived, but only dreamt of living." The key, however, had been turned in the lock and Hawthorne was to issue from his dungeon, blinking like a mole in the light of day and inclined, ever and again, to hurry back to that merciful obscurity where he did not need to be on any particular behavior. His solitude, partially congenital, had now been so stamped into his temperament that no vagaries of fortune could destroy his inclination for it. It was his natural state of being and though conditions might thrust him into the midst of life he was always to be a visitor and not a part of the scene.

VII

The work produced by Hawthorne up to the time that he met Sophia Peabody (a meeting which, together with the publication of "Twice Told Tales," may be said to have terminated his dolor-

ous twelve years of solitude and introspection) was not bulky but it was entirely indicative of the author who was to assume so important a place in the annals of New England letters. Three books were the main fruits of this period but two of them, "Fanshawe," and the anonymous "Peter Parley's Universal History on the Basis of Geography" are best forgotten. The first was the tentative unfolding of a talent obsessed by Scott's novels and the second was typical hack-work of the era, undistinguished, hurriedly done, and partially the creation of Elizabeth Hawthorne. But the third book, "Twice Told Tales," is a part of the New England heritage to-day. There were but eighteen stories and sketches in the first series of "Twice Told Tales" but Hawthorne had, by the time of its publication, composed nearly forty pieces. He was therefore well set and developed as a writer of short efforts.

To return briefly to "Fanshawe" it may be described as a short impossible romance with some fair description and a deal of stuff and nonsense. The scene is Harley College (which was inspired, of course, by Bowdoin College) and the action is concerned with the love of two undergraduates for Ellen, a young woman placed somewhat curiously in the care of Dr. Melmoth, the president of this rural seat of learning. A nefarious villain named Butler conspires to inveigle Ellen away, force her into a marriage, and so secure her wealth, but he is discomfited by Fanshawe. Fanshawe then hands Ellen over to his handsome and wealthy school-

mate, Edward Wolcott. This farrago of nonsense was rightly suppressed by Hawthorne and yet there is some curious matter in it. Fanshawe, a poor recluse already passing into a decline through overmuch study, is a fanciful and romanticized picture of Hawthorne himself. There is the aspect of a hero out of the Gothic romances in this youth who can hold a villain at bay with a burning eye. Edward Wolcott must be regarded as Hawthorne's subconscious romanticization of the luckier, wealthier, more socially-adept scholar of the day at Bowdoin, a Ned Preble, for instance, or a Longfellow. A comparison, unconscious, perhaps, lurked in Hawthorne's mind as he worked on this romance, a comparison of the difference between himself so solitary, so cut off from the social amenities of the times, and the more bland and wealthier students who mingled so happily in the polite gatherings of the institution. Except for what one may so read into "Fanshawe" and for the stray descriptions of college life and scenery there is little to hold the reader in this first attempt. The structure creaks abominably and the characterization is too stark and obvious. Hawthorne was on a false scent when he followed this work to the bitter end. It was no more than an exercise and he was perfectly right in destroying whatever copies he could lay his hands on almost immediately after the publication of the book.

But the short stories and sketches are a different matter. Here was the authentic and unmistakable revelation of a talent as extraordinary as it was

new in the literary history of the time. It is true that the public paid very little attention, indeed, to this phoenix of form and finished prose that rose so quietly from the ashes of Salem. The tales were dissipated on thin air for the most part and yet their function was assured from the start. They were seeds blown by a new wind and though many of them fluttered to soil as stony as some of the hill farms of New England a few found fallow earth wherein to sprout. The importance of Hawthorne to his day was momentous and yet he stood decidedly aloof from what might be called the main cultural current. This awakened territory that was springing into intellectual action and expressing itself through new voices after 1830 needed the leaven of a painstaking artistry and this was exactly what Hawthorne revealed in the best of his short tales. He could write a delicately suave prose, but, best of all, he was animated by an aesthetic urge that was somewhat alien to the moralistic and informative inclinations of his New England. It was true that this urge was choked and hampered by the twisting roots of the old New England itself which was born decidedly in his blood but this interference failed to thwart the half-unconscious purpose of Hawthorne's daemon. Emerson might wear the prophet's mantle and Whittier might express the kindling aspirations for reform and Longfellow might illustrate the academic tendencies of the day and Lowell might develop the contemporary humanism but Hawthorne summed up in himself the sheer artistic impulses of the era. He re-

mained the artist to the last. It was as though he gathered the scattered essences of artistry and aesthetic concern vague-blown and fragile over the New England scene, and from them drew his thin but visible vitality. His solitude aided him in his attitude. He did not have the conflict of men and the perplexities of new outbursts of social endeavor to subvert him from his instinctive course.

The short tales and sketches by Hawthorne which made up the first series of "Twice Told Tales" and appeared in various publications from which they were to be rescued for further volumes exhibit the writer's imagination in three distinct manners. There is his imagination in a creative sense in the fantastic tales, in such efforts as "The Minister's Black Veil," "The Wedding Knell," and "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment." There is his imagination in a re-creative sense in the historical tales, in such revivifications of past atmospheres and scenes as "The Gray Champion" and "The May-Pole of Merry Mount." Finally, there is his imagination in an observational sense, in such sketches of manners and contemporary scenes as "Sunday at Home," "A Rill From the Town Pump" and "Sights From a Steeple." These works have been commented upon time and again and it would serve no purpose and become merely repetitious to restate their peculiar qualities, indicate their virtues, and glance briefly at their defects. They were the work of a young man of genius, a young man blessed with a flowing and spontaneous fancy, with a curious objective obsession with the sense of sin and its

effect on the conscience, and with a purity of selectiveness unique in the letters of his time. Practically all of these pieces were written in the chamber under the eaves on Herbert Street and they are, therefore, reflections of the activities of Hawthorne's mind and impulses during those slow years of early maturity. It is easy enough to relate the simpler classifications to Hawthorne's days.

The essays, the sketches of things seen, are assuredly the product of a lonely man, a man who wandered through the world of his youth torn between shyness and inquisitiveness. He was not the man in the crowd buffeting and being buffeted by the unceasing stream of humanity. Rather was he the town-pump set in the midst of the town and somewhat apart from it and yet observing everything that happens and all who pass with a sort of still curiosity. A brooding contemplation, melancholy or blithe as the occasion might warrant, seizes upon the most natural and slight gestures and reanimates them with a gentle charm that is part of the finest tradition of essay-writing. This drawing of life through the eyes, as it were, was not without its powerful discipline on Hawthorne's selectiveness as a descriptional writer. It taught him arrangement, emphasis, what to retain and what to discard, and unification of impressions. He approached life almost as a painter would, his palette filled with sober pigments and his brushes of a fine feathery order. Nowhere in the crowded library of New England letters can the reader find more delicate, more astute, more *real* descriptions of the

native landscape than in the essays and sketches (and, indeed, the novels) of Hawthorne. He fairly captured the native scene, its physical front and, somehow interfused with this, its spiritual emanations. Part of the reason for this was Hawthorne's sensitiveness to the spirit of places. He could feel the scene impinging on his consciousness whether it was a woodland, a country road or a town thoroughfare.

His eyes devoured the life about him but in that life they could find no more than a limited picturesqueness. He had to look further for those unusual elements upon which his spirit was to feed so constantly, and, being a lonely untraveled man, this meant an immersion in books. Being the child of Puritans it was but natural for him to fling himself (if so abrupt a phrase may be applied to Hawthorne at all) upon the chronicles of early New England, the conquest of the wilderness, the fanáticisms of religious zeal, and the subdued coloring of infant Salem and Boston. It was from these sources that he drew the many historical tales that form so excellent a proportion of his literary endeavors. These brief flashes of history, miniatures of simplicity and unification, chastely carved and as polished as cameos, were unusual in that they exemplified an urge which was hardly noticeable in the New England of that day. They revealed a distinct creativeness in the handling of historical matter, a sort of humanization of the dry bones of chronicles that anticipated the more important ventures of later eras. Hawthorne's fancy played

about the ancient tales of young New England, about Endicott and his flag, about the motley crew that roystered beneath the Maypole at Merry Mount, about the persecuted Quakers, but it played in a restrained and reasonable manner. These gracefully conceived reanimations of history were compact with a rare simplicity and an inborn literary tact that pushed the frontiers of American writing still further back. The skill in selectiveness, the quiet mastery of detail and rare eschewment of nonessentials, the brevity of composition, and, above all, the instinctive comprehension of the period involved combined to fashion these stories into rare fusions of historical fact and delicate imagination. Though the archaic note is persistent in some of these tales to-day, a note emphasized by changing styles, still the best among them continue to live with a quietly tenacious vitality that is unusual. Hawthorne's genius was not at its highest evolvement in these historical tales but it was on a plane peculiarly its own.

To find the man's genius at its highest expression one must turn to the third classification of tales, the stories combining fantasy, allegory, and a sort of tortured reality that trembles between two worlds. Here was the terrain wherein Hawthorne walked most at ease, an autumn land where a dull rain-bloated cloud that might be called the shadow of sin hovered desolately, and weak mortals wandered seeking the outward doors and seeking them in vain. Both the weakness and the strength of Hawthorne's genius were implicit in these tales and

this weakness and strength came from the same source,—his Puritan heritage, that still dark blood that flowed so mutely through his veins. The weakness was to be found in an overpowering moralism, a monotonous insistence on ethical illuminations that, often enough, threw his tales out of their proper focus. The source of this urge was, plainly enough, the old New England puritanical attitude toward life that sought the sinful speck in the fruit before it became manifest to the naked eye. However, it was from this same Puritan urge that Hawthorne's genius received its strength, that dark pondering on life, that essential gravity that constantly dug beneath surfaces of the minds of men, that steady twilight glow that gave an almost spectral aspect to the scenery and mortal beings who walked the town-streets of New England. The best of Hawthorne's fantastic short tales are surcharged with an unearthly glow, a brooding sense of the supernatural, a comprehension of the invisible and mystic auras surrounding the soul. They are like spells and if these spells are weakened by an over-obvious moralistic inference the reader must accept them for what they are and reflect that no other type of mind but one intensely susceptible to moralistic conclusions could have created them. They are the late harvest of the Puritan tradition, dark-petaled flowers growing in lonely meadows and more gracious in aspect than the early harvests.

Hawthorne was not a Puritan of the old type but he was obviously the child of those forebears. He had reached a plane where he could view the

Puritan conceptions of life and fate with some degree of detachment, where he could take up the ancient urges and beliefs and reshape them with an aesthetic comprehension of their values. Though the shadow of sin hovered over him as it had hovered over his fathers, that shadow did not eat into his soul in quite the same way. It permeated his intelligence but it was impalpable. It was not a grewsome conviction but a somber aspect of living that might be molded into some sort of art. An aesthete came to the surface in Hawthorne and dominated an obliqueness of mind that had, in other years, dominated its thin-lipped victims.

It is obvious that Hawthorne's peculiarly lonely boyhood, youth, and early manhood had much to do with the shaping of his mind, almost as much, in fact, as his Puritan forebears had to do with it. An ingrowing intelligence surrounded on all sides by the shattered aspects of Puritan life, by Salem with its deserted port and its quiet streets, by a house that was almost a tomb, by the essential "feel" in the air of an ancient way of living, by books that were the histories of old fanaticisms, by ghosts that were the ghosts of one's forefathers, could hardly fight its way clear. New England as a whole might be fighting itself free but Hawthorne's struggle was fiercer and his complete success was dubious. He was not a part of the more or less conscious urge toward liberation which set in with the 1830s and yet his very indication of the limitations of the Puritan attitude with all its maladies of the soul was a distinct aid and adjunct to

that urge. He orientated the old Puritanism to some degree and translated it from an invisible essence to a visible and weak-kneed giant that might be combatted by those who desire to lay it low. This peculiar function which Fate had thrust upon him was as unconscious to him as it was to his pitifully small audience.

VIII

In 1837 Hawthorne stepped into Time. Before that he had been living outside of Time although for the few seasons immediately previous to that date he had been standing at the door of the world and knocking with some degree of dubious timidity. When "Twice Told Tales" was issued the door had opened and when the young man "handsomer than Lord Byron," accompanied by his two sisters, stepped into the house of Elizabeth and Sophia Peabody Hawthorne may be said to have entered the world. His meeting with Sophia Peabody was really the beginning of his worldly life although vague stories connect him with one or two women previous to this encounter. It does not matter whether or not a fickle Boston beauty befooled him into challenging a friend to a duel only to have that friend convince him of the Boston beauty's double-dealing. This story, if it is true, merely shows how badly prepared for life Hawthorne was, how romantically inclined and naïve he could be. But with Sophia Peabody came love and with love came a dozen other things, a refreshened ambition,

for instance, and an objective for which to work and make material gains. Hawthorne could no longer sit in the haunted chamber under the eaves on Herbert Street and let the world go by while he read or fashioned his tales from the dark fabric of his fancy. He perceived that he had a possible place in Time, that he must make a home for himself and no longer hide away in the somber house of his mother. Then, too, the publication of "Twice Told Tales" was an urge. Although the book had caused no more than a minor ripple that ripple had been sufficient to provoke a few friends to an outspoken declaration of the young man's merits. It was time, therefore, for Hawthorne to step out into the world. Yet he was so unprepared that he did not know how to go about it.

He continued his quiet courtship with some degree of secrecy for he knew that his own sisters were averse to seeing him slip from the sleepy milieu wherein he had existed so many years. Sophia Peabody had been an invalid for long seasons, suffering from terrific headaches, and this, too, was probably an inducement toward quietude. In any case Hawthorne would have been quiet about it, for he was a subdued and silent man as reticent in his passions as he was in his calms. His Puritanical upbringing and his congenital morbidity had convinced him that behind even the most joyous things stood a sad spectre who might, in an instant, translate the brightness into shadow. A man entering life in this way enters it with some degree of armor. He is impervious, to a certain extent,

against the barbs of fortune. This was a lucky thing for Hawthorne for he was to know many disappointments in the course of his career. The reality was to fall short constantly of the dream although it was never to do so in the case of his married life. That, at least, was to see him through triumphantly. But the perplexing business of making a living was to continually stare him in the face. He was an artist in a land where artists were a strange sort of phoenix and he was to find that there was no particular sort of preparation for this unusual kind of bird. In 1837, therefore, when he stepped into Time as an author and a lover, he might well have been dubious about his prospects. His friends had sped far ahead of him in the race of life and here he was, still at scratch, troubled about making a start. All that he possessed was his imagination, a cursed shyness, an incurable addiction to solitude, and some degree—not much—of Yankee common sense. With these weapons he decided to build up a home and a future.

CHAPTER TWO

I

THE door into Time opened and Hawthorne diffidently stepped through in 1837; yet it was to be some years before he ventured any great distance. He stood just outside of his hermitage observing the perspective with a rather worried eye. There really was not much to see from his peculiar point of vantage and though rumors may have reached him from a few friends, Bridge or Pierce, for instance, they can hardly have impinged upon his consciousness with any great degree of violence. He knew very well that there was a modern world and he must have realized that that modern world had been uniquely accelerated during the decade that had paralleled his maturity. However, he was not the type of intelligence to get below the surface of his era. He preferred to dodge back into the Past. Now, though the future wore a thinly threatening aspect the immediate present was not without its delicate and composed pleasures. As Sophia Peabody bourgeoned in Hawthorne's mind (and she had a way of flowering that was essentially feminine) his nature thawed to a considerable extent. Days were passed in her company, days in which walks were taken through the well-known Salem scenes and the old surroundings must have taken

on new colors. The town put on a brighter aspect, and Hawthorne, only too well aware that joys have a way of shifting into mere mockeries, may well have pondered the durability of this pleasing scene. The somber qualities of the Puritan rose to the surface. He decided to go off by himself, to travel into the Berkshires and Vermont and cut himself loose from every connection, including his mother. It is possible that he desired that solitude wherein he was so emphatically at home, there to ponder over his prospects and adjust himself to the thought of a new order of things.

After his return the two lovers became engaged, although the matter was kept a close secret. There were reasons for this secrecy. Hawthorne was not quite ready to break the news in the Herbert Street house; he sensed there a thin antagonism in his sisters and he feared the effect on his mother. Indeed, his oldest sister, Elizabeth, appears to have suspected the probable trend of his acquaintance with Sophia Peabody from the first and endeavored in some slight ways to obstruct and divert Hawthorne's inclination. He, therefore, maintained a discreet silence as to his purpose. It was not that he was particularly under the influence of his family or dominated by them to any extent for he appears to have been quite the young king in his tiny dusky kingdom; but he was a part of that quiet retired *ménage* and he naturally felt some compunctions at upsetting the equilibrium of the haven that had sheltered him from life for so many years. After all, his prospects were exceedingly dubious. The

financial future was a matter of precarious possibilities. He had made no great inroads on popular fame. Reticently, then, like the typical thin-lipped New Englander he kept his counsels to himself until fortune might indicate more clearly his probable path.

Fortune took two years in coming to the point. During this interim he continued the composition of short stories and sketches. While waiting for life to call him into the midst of things he remained stolidly in the shadow of life and occupied his mind with such ghosts as walked through "Howe's Masquerade," "Lady Eleanore's Mantle," and "Old Esther Dudley." The ferocity of the modern scene smashed against his calm only once and that was when his old college-friend, Jonathan Cilley, was killed in a duel. It has been affirmed that Hawthorne took the death of Cilley much to heart in that he suspected his own fire-eating vigor (when he challenged a friend to fight over a legendary vampire-lady from Boston) afforded an example to Cilley. This, however, is in the realms of misty conjecture. If Hawthorne ever did challenge anybody to a duel he didn't fight it and Cilley had but half an example before him. For the most part, then, Hawthorne remained in Salem among his ghosts and peered somewhat uneasily through the fog of existence for the bright beckoning hand of fortune. When that hand did appear through the mist it was blackened with coal-dust. Hawthorne was appointed a measurer in the Boston Custom House at a salary of fifteen hundred dollars a year. Of all the ap-

pointments that literary men have ever received this was probably one of the most ridiculous, a direct reflection on the evaluation that New England put on her literary figures. If they could not support themselves as preachers, lawyers or college professors they could go out in Boston Harbor and weigh coal. Hawthorne went to work in January, 1839. He was thirty-five years old and just stepping into life via a coal-barge.

During Hawthorne's twenty-seven months as a measurer he appears to have been painstaking, hard-working, and entirely capable. Flung so into a grossly practical life he welcomed the change, at first, with some degree of pleasure. He felt that he was earning his own salt at last, that he was buffeting his way with the rest of the busy humming New England that was so much more engrossed in business than he had imagined. It was good to tramp the dirty decks of cargo-boats and catch the cold sea-wind on the spray. As he attended to the various details of his business, treated with sinewy captains and sailors, appraised the salt fish and coal and iron and molasses, and sat in tiny cabins drinking his noggin of rum, he felt himself a part of life at last and no longer a dreamer loitering in a shaded chamber just off the high-road of living. There was novelty in the new scene, material for copious notations, and he made the most of it for the better part of a year. After that a weariness, a dispirited acceptance of things, crept over him. The newness had worn off and, at heart, Hawthorne was not at all adapted to this busy intercourse. He

was a creature of solitude and though for a time the unique aspects of an unknown scene might carry him on, as soon as it became a regular aspect of living an inborn need for loneliness welled up within him. When the novelty wore off there was no more copy in his occupation, and, though he used it or not, life was always copy to Hawthorne. The practicalities of living were to him no more than the shell of a spiritual life.

His social existence during this period was a matter of vague and tentative gestures. The Peabody family—and Sophia in particular—lured him into an emotional acceptance of life. When, in 1840, they removed from Salem to Boston, the contacts became more intimate. It was no longer a matter of letters but a matter of consistent companionship. Elizabeth Peabody became the administrative head of a shop that combined in itself a library, bookstore and homeopathic drug-store and this place of business speedily developed into a Transcendental center. "The Dial" was published there and certain figures, George Ripley and Emerson, for instance, were frequent visitors. Hawthorne began to hear about such things as German philosophy, Fourierism, "the better world," and the complete expression of one's self. It is to be suspected that these things did not concern him too deeply, although he may have accepted some of the radical notions of the time. He was essentially a conservative man, a hard-shell when it came to innovations of any sort. He was never a "come-outer." The world about him was still

a semi-alien place and the exuberance of youth was a passion he was never to experience. He was not dull-witted (he was too much the fastidious dreamer for that) but he was disappointingly phlegmatic, a machine-man where politics and reforms were concerned. The idea of adventuring into the arena of life to combat the inimical lions of ancient misconceptions and dogmas never entered his head. This young giant of New England, this awkward Titan-child, might be rising to its feet and staggering after the brave banners of Emerson and a dozen lesser leaders but Hawthorne was not to be found in the vanguard, except by chance. Brook Farm was in the near future but Brook Farm was more a refuge than an experiment to the serious young man already intent on marriage.

In the meanwhile his arduous labors on coal and salt barges dammed his creative work. Except for a single story, "John Inglefield's Thanksgiving," his output was confined to three volumes of children's stories—rehandlings of historic episodes from colonial and revolutionary annals—which were published from the Peabody shop in 1841. His long immersion in the chronicles of New England stood him in good stead here, and "Grandfather's Chair," "Famous Old People," and "Liberty Tree," (the three books to appear later under the collective title of "The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair") reveal how neatly and simply Hawthorne could rewrite history for children. As pleasant as these works are it can hardly be affirmed that they added anything to his literary

stature. They were essentially the labor of a man unable to cope with pure creative matter while diverted by a more or less repugnant occupation. He needed solitude, an emancipation from the world, long hours of revery, and the sleepy tedium of rural living, if he was to give the best that was in him.

So time passed to labors in Boston Bay, to the writing of children's histories, to the quiet companionship of Sophia, to the brief meetings with various Transcendentals, and then, in the spring of 1841, the governmental administration changed and Hawthorne (obviously in imminent fear of unceremonious removal) left the Custom House. This was the first of the three departures from governmental appointments endured by Hawthorne because of the ridiculous patronage system which regulated the affairs of the United States. We may guess that he was not too broken hearted over the shift in his fortunes. He had, for long, been quite satiated with his grimy portion of utilitarian life and the idea of pleasant green fields and ploughed acres must have glimmered pleasantly in his mind. But where was he to go? He did not possess enough money or courage to marry and the prospect of a return to Salem must have seemed gloomy enough. In Miss Peabody's shop, however, he had heard all about the new coöperative colony to be started at Brook Farm in Roxbury ("The Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education," to give it its full name) and this appealed to him as an immediate haven. It offered several attractive fea-

tures. Perhaps cottages would be built there eventually where young couples might live. There would be a fine and distinguished mingling of manual labor and mental development. Above all, it would keep the shy writer from his cursed solitude in the shadowy Salem chamber. So, by April, Hawthorne found himself installed as one of the gentleman-farmers at Brook Farm. Chance had made him one of the laborers for Utopia.

II

The spectacle of "Nath. Hawthorne, Ploughman," (he signed one of his letters from Brook Farm in that way) is both humorous and anomalous. He was no more adapted to farm-life than he was to the onerous duties of a measurer in the Custom House. In fact, Hawthorne was unfitted for all of the jobs which Fortune vouchsafed him. His place was in a quiet study where he could dream over his books and manuscripts. Yet there was a portion of his brain that recognized the virtues of labor, that—inspired by an old Puritan conception—believed that the sweat of man's brow induced by hard manual work was as admirable—perhaps more so—than the travail of the soul over the fantastic conceptions of fictions. Luckily enough, this portion of Hawthorne's brain was invariably subdued and silenced by the aesthetic consciousness that welled up within him.

It was in the midst of a snow-storm that Hawthorne arrived at Brook Farm and took his place

among those idealistic workers who planned so naïvely and superbly a Utopia amidst the New England farms. As usual with him, the novelty of the experience aroused an enthusiasm that abated almost as quickly as it grew: He had put a thousand dollars into the undertaking (the greater part of his savings from the meager Custom House salary) and in the back of his mind always was the idea that here might be reared that little cottage to which he intended to bring a wife. He started work with some gusto, attacking piles of manure with a dung-fork, milking cows in the most inexpert manner, chopping wood, and hoeing beans. The picture of the sensitive writer (no longer young but now thirty-seven years old) clad in a heavy smock and stomping along (in New England they do not stamp but stomp) in tremendous cow-hide boots with soles two inches thick is worth loitering over. He was certainly not unduly feverish about the future of mankind or the ideals behind the Brook Farm experiment. Emerson, who viewed Brook Farm from afar as a Transcendental picnic, probably understood the futility of the undertaking no better than Hawthorne.

But Hawthorne imagined he had something personal at stake. It was his future. He wanted to marry and in order to marry he needed a home. Brook Farm offered a slim enough opportunity but there was some hope that the colony might last. As time went on, however, Hawthorne grew skeptical. He also grew tired of manual labor and five months after he first picked up the dung-fork

he admitted his weariness. "Even my Custom House experience," he noted, "was not such a thraldom and weariness; my mind and heart were free. Oh, labor is the curse of the world, and nobody can meddle with it without becoming proportionably brutified! Is it a praiseworthy matter that I have spent five golden months in providing food for cows and horses? It is not so." This was in August, 1841, and, though with the interruption of a return to Salem and several visits to Boston and nearby towns, Hawthorne was to remain until the spring of 1842, he was, from the time of this first unrest, never a real part of the colony.

He went about his labors doggedly for a time and then eased himself out of them and became more of a boarder than anything else. He made a few friends—not many, and conversed with the dynamic Margaret Fuller, always with a cautious and critical eye cocked at her. He wandered about and saw flowers and woodlands and lonely roads and sunsets. He was, in a last analysis, a lost soul among these wordy theoretical disciples of a foggy Utopia. The unceasing observance that was so much a part of his solitary nature stored up impressions which were to be translated into the pages of "The Blithedale Romance" some years later, and that is about all that Hawthorne got from his sojourn at Brook Farm. He was simply not the type of mentality to assist at experiments. He could not let himself go. Self-consciousness undoubtedly played its part in this careful withdrawal of himself from anything that smacked of freakish propen-

sities. "The real Me was never an associate of the community," he noted, "There has been a spectral Appearance there, sounding the horn at daybreak, and milking the cows, and hoeing potatoes, and raking hay, toiling in the sun, and doing me the honour to assume my name. But this spectre was not myself." Like many dreamers he could detach his superior intelligence from his physical manifestations and watch the body at its labors much as one stranger observes another.

Hawthorne's literary work suffered as badly at Brook Farm as it had suffered while he was measuring coal for an ungrateful government. Another children's book was produced, "Biographical Stories for Children," and the enlarged edition of "Twice Told Tales," a volume with twice as many stories included, was ushered from the press of James Munroe and Company in two volumes. That was all. For nearly three years now his creative faculties had lain dormant although the pen had been intermittently busy in his hand with children's stories and the voluminous entries in his note-books. He was waiting for that milieu which would give him the peace he desired to settle down once more to hard literary creation. Of course, this milieu was to include Sophia. She was uppermost in his mind always and now that she had recovered from the invalidism of years, her chronic headaches disappearing at this time, Hawthorne set his heart upon an immediate marriage, be the prospects what they might. If he did not marry he would sink back again into the drab lotos-land

of Salem, there to hide in his chamber until the end of time. There is reason to believe that he feared this, that he realized in some measure the ominous threat of his own inclination for solitude. He was also very much in love. It was with some trepidation, then, that he broke the news of his impending marriage to his mother, and his relief must have been great to discover that the wise old lady (for all of her retirement from the world) had long ago observed in what direction things were moving for her son and was quite agreeable to the proposed wedding. Hawthorne was thirty nine years old and Sophia was thirty two. They were no longer in the spring of life when they were married on July 9, 1842, at the Peabody house in Boston. Hawthorne had left Brook Farm with no regrets some months before. He was now on the verge of that decade wherein he was to create all of his best work except "The Marble Faun."

III

Between two tall gate-posts of rough hewn stone (the gate itself having fallen from its hinges at some unknown epoch) Hawthorne and his wife, at the termination of their three hours' honeymoon journey from Boston, saw the home in which they were to spend the first three years of their married life. The gray front of an old parsonage looming at the end of an avenue of black ash trees stood before them. This was the Old Manse, a dwelling set back from the town-street of Concord and waiting

patiently for the subdued domesticity that was to inhabit it. The story of Hawthorne's occupancy of this moss-grown building is a story of shadows, of dim figures moving circumspectly and silently through long days of sunshine and rain and snow while the intellectually-enfevered town of Concord pursued a varied orbit in a different direction. It would not be accurate to assert that Hawthorne took no part in the Concord life of his day. Emerson, living nearby, came to converse with him. He wandered about the fields with Ellery Channing. He even went boating with the big-nosed Thoreau. There was Margaret Fuller to perturb him slightly with Transcendental arguments. Inside the Old Manse occasional visitors rippled the calm surface of the days, George Bradford, for instance, or the mildly insane Frank Farley from Brook Farm, or the bustling George Hillard come with news of the more suave Cambridge group which at that time was already dominated by the dapper Professor Longfellow. But these interruptions were no more than slight stones flung into a pool. The tiny concentric circles spread rapidly and merged into the still expanse of lonely living. The confirmed solitary was at peace at last except for the irritating prick of poverty which continued to urge him into gestures of some sort.

Hawthorne's life at the Old Manse, then, was a sort of New England idyl. Although he was very near "the rude bridge that arched the flood" none of the exalted passion that animated those long-vanished farmers who treated the British to the

smell of gunpowder throbbed in his veins. The Old Manse was a ghostly house to the curious burghers of Concord who passed it always with an eye cocked for the withdrawn inhabitants. The dark windows gloomed across the grass at night with no lights behind them. Now and then the old coachman from the station set down a fare before the posts from which the unused gate had fallen. It was not often, however, and we may be sure that the old ladies of Concord put their heads together over their steaming cups of green tea and conjectured as to whether it was a living man or a phantom that appeared in the market-garden and hoed with the meditative air of a Greek philosopher. The spirit of solitude invested this ancient edifice with an autumn mantle. It was the sort of place that might have inspired a serious-minded romancer to curious thoughts, thoughts not gloomy in themselves, perhaps, but yet touched with that eery light which partakes as much of the hidden life beyond the actualities of existence as it does of the daily phenomena of living.

Yet life went on in the Old Manse and sometimes in the fields and on the river. It would never do to give an impression of Hawthorne as a gloomy and embittered solitary hiding from Time in the creaking chambers of a dusty parsonage. The lamp-light glowed brightly enough on the sturdy walls and if the outside world was more or less held at bay this does not predicate that a smaller and more personal world did not exist within the soft ring cast by the yellow flame. Hawthorne, in spite of

the mounting irritation of poverty, was as happy as he could be. He had Sophia with him and Sophia adored him. He was her Endymion, her Apollo, and he took a grave joy in pleasing her, in attending to various chores, in washing dishes, in cooking, in reading to her during the long New England evenings. To sit in the lamp-light and relive the passages of Macaulay, of Shakespeare, of Spenser, was a sort of vicarious existence for him. And when he was writing (for now that he had his freedom from the chains of ulterior obligations he seized his pen again) Sophia could continue her art-work, her sketching and painting and modeling, for she was a confirmed dilettante of the pictorial arts. Thus the quiet household continued its placid way.

Hawthorne had already impressed his subdued personality on his few friends. They understood his strange temperament and accepted his silence and respected his involuntary desire not to be drawn out of himself. Thus one acquaintance speaks of meeting him at Emerson's house about this time: "There were various men and women of note assembled, and I, who listened attentively to all the fine things that were said, was for some time scarcely aware of a man who sat upon the edge of the circle, a little withdrawn, his head slightly thrown forward upon his breast, and his bright eyes clearly burning under his black brow. As I drifted down the stream of talk, this person, who sat silent as a shadow, looked to me, as Webster might have looked, had he been a poet,—a kind of poetic Web-

ster. He rose and walked to the window, and stood quietly there for a long time, watching the dead white landscape. No appeal was made to him, nobody looked after him, the conversation flowed steadily on as if every one understood that his silence was to be respected. It was the same thing at table. In vain the silent man imbibed aesthetic tea. Whatever fancies it inspired did not flower at his lips. But there was a light in his eye which assured me that nothing was lost. So supreme was his silence that it presently engrossed me to the exclusion of everything else. There was very brilliant discourse, but this silence was much more poetic and fascinating. Fine things were said by the philosophers, but much finer things were implied by the dumbness of this gentleman with heavy brows and black hair. When he presently rose and went, Emerson, with the 'slow, wise smile' that breaks over his face, like day over the sky, said:

" 'Hawthorne rides well his horse of the night.' "

This was the Hawthorne of the period of the Old Manse, "a man who sat upon the edge of the circle, a little withdrawn." The new spirit of the times was already a noticeable phenomenon and Hawthorne was conscious of it. He was present at its inception and he must have followed its growth for too many of his acquaintances were a part of that brave, often deluded, sometimes freakish group for him not to have been aware of the troubled exalted currents that permeated the chilly air above the bustling New England towns. In a faint, almost lackadaisical, sort of way he was interested and

moved by this new spirit. But he could not be a part of it for his solitude restrained him from an immediate mingling in the vexed problems of the day; his sluggishness of temperament so far as the practicalities of living and "causes" were concerned did not possess enough self-volition; and his inborn aesthetic concern with letters lifted him above and apart from any intense humanistic manifestations.

During his three years residence at the Old Manse he fairly exhausted his vein as a narrator of short pieces. The necessity for immediate money was always before him and, as rapidly as he could, he flung his small, polished stones of literature at a somewhat insensitive public. This need for money was aggravated by the birth of his first child, Una, on March 3, 1844. More than ever, it was necessary for him to keep afloat. Therefore he wrote for such varied publications as "The Boys' and Girls' Magazine," "The Pioneer," "The Democratic Review," which, alas, failed, and "Graham's Magazine." He edited the "Papers of an Old Dartmoor Prisoner," and he assisted his friend, Horatio Bridge, in revising that naval officer's "Journal of an African Cruiser." The new tales which he wrote were collected under the title of "Mosses from an Old Manse" and published by Wiley and Putnam of New York shortly after he left Concord for Salem in 1846. With this book his career as a writer of short sketches may be said to have reached its apogee and end, although he was still to collect another volume of early pieces and give them to the public. By 1846 Hawthorne

was forty-two years old, and, though he possessed an unquestioned place as a creator of short tales, those greater works that were to place him quite definitely in the front rank of New England writers were still to be made public. Two-thirds of his life had passed and he was yet to cement his position as a creative genius. How different is the comparison between him and that other fellow-student and writer from Bowdoin, Longfellow. That facile versifier at the age of forty-two had to his credit, omitting translations, eight popular books, including "Evangeline," (the suggestion for which he received from Hawthorne), "Voices of the Night," "Ballads and Other Poems," and "The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems." He had traveled and seen the major part of the European world. He was the friend and intimate of such famous men as Charles Dickens and Washington Irving. And, most important of all, he was esteemed and highly popular with a huge public. In 1846 Longfellow had thirty-six years of adulation before him while Hawthorne had but eighteen years of his life left. It is in such ways that Destiny moves.

Hawthorne's claim to fame at this time was based on (roughly speaking) a hundred short stories and sketches. It had taken him twenty years to write them. If he had never written anything else he would have survived through these stories, survived as a gently growing provincial writer picturing his particular terrain with the cleverness of the solitary observer. The immanence of genius is here but, more often than not, it is but vaguely adum-

brated. There are obvious reasons for this vagueness of emphasis. In the first place Hawthorne, as a young writer, had no peculiar and dominating objective. He wanted to write because writing came to him easily, but, after all, he had nothing especial to say. Therefore he seized upon anything that occurred to him and as nothing occurred to him—rapt away from life as he was and always imbued with a coldness of passion—but the immediate facts of an eventless career in a small town or the dim resuscitations of historical figures out of dusty old chronicles he turned to them and made the most of them. Sometimes his sketches read like the conversation of a man talking softly to himself. As he continued to write he continued to develop and his aesthetic consciousness grew as he matured. A far-away nebulous objective appeared on his intellectual horizon, an objective adumbrated in some of the fantastic tales and receiving its growing urge from that Puritan consciousness of sin and the dark battle of conscience. Hawthorne grew in stature steadily as a writer as the slow seasons passed, and, eventually, he who had merely set down his fancies and observations as a solitary creature who needed this outlet as a means of expression and a proof that he was alive became a creative artist with an objective clear to us now but, perhaps, dim to him then.

IV

While Hawthorne was struggling with the deplorable problem of life, turning out his short tales

with that slowness of composition peculiar to him and whipping himself to new endeavors in spite of the natural lassitude of his being—a lassitude connived at and developed by that decade or more of doing nothing in the quietude of the Salem house, his friends, particularly Horatio Bridge and Franklin Pierce, bethought themselves of the shy writer's predicament. The idea of giving Hawthorne a push forward seemed reasonable enough and they cast about for a means to this laudable end. It is doubtful that Hawthorne demanded any aid. His meager income kept him barely afloat and he knew that he would have to relinquish the Old Manse in the near future, for the heir to that ancient estate was already in the offing and clamoring for the house. The first inclination that beset Hawthorne was a removal to Salem and yet he feared this return It would not mean too much of a relapse into his former obscurity for he possessed a wife and child now and a certain modicum of fame and yet it meant a return to a curiously unloved community. Still, something must be done. He could not exist as a writer—primarily a hack-writer—because his own lethargy thwarted in him the possibilities of the necessary unceasing flow and production of the adaptable hack. He needed an anchor to windward.

Then James Polk was elected President of the United States. This was the political change that Hawthorne's friends desired and they took immediate advantage of it. The writer was to be hoisted into another political post. That patronage which

had cast him out once was to take him in again. There were meetings to which various Senators were inveigled (Bridge being a moving spirit) and possible appointments were discussed. The idea of a Consulate floated in the air. The Legation at China was put forward. A clerkship in the Charlestown Navy Yard actually materialized but was refused by Hawthorne. Finally the friends concentered on Salem. The Post Office was broached first but various antagonistic influences kept Hawthorne from it. Letters were written and personal calls were made and arguments were put forth and, finally, on March 23, 1846, Nathaniel Hawthorne received his appointment as surveyor of the Salem Custom House. After a few years of release and comparative calm he was forced back into the drudgery of utilitarian life.

Even before the appointment reached him Hawthorne had removed to Salem with his family settling down in the Herbert Street house where he remained for some time. It was there, with the ghosts of his own lonely youth about him, that he wrote the introduction to the "Mosses From an Old Manse," that gentle description of the haven where he had been initiated into the calm satisfactions of married life. Curiously enough, he does not seem to have looked back with any great regret at those years when he was his own master but rather to have entered upon his duties as surveyor with some degree of enthusiasm. Those inborn Puritan urges which demanded a life of practical usefulness and suggested that scribbling sketches

was no more than the wasting of one's heritage rose to the surface of his nature again. He was periodically troubled by these apparent doubts of the usefulness of the writer's fancy. Luckily enough, these misgivings were rather feeble in comparison to the creative urge that gave sustenance to Hawthorne's mind. Indeed, his Puritanical inhibitions were curiously attenuated in him. They existed as dark deposits in the blood and they shaped his mind to some extent but, for the most part, he could see them in a coldly detached manner, could turn them over and over, so to speak, and meditate upon their curious impulses. He was, after all, a Puritan who had eaten of the lotos and who was, therefore, lethargic from sleepy syrops that coursed through his slow-moving blood and who could recline in a trance of the utilitarian, religious, and sociological faculties while his aesthetic intelligence remained awake and observant. From this trance he saw life unsteadily and by piecemeal, but what he did see he saw with a surprising clarity. Now and again the sharp summons of Duty (as that wry-faced goddess was named in New England) reached his ears but it was only when his purse was empty and he had reached the end of his rope.

The great days of Salem as a sea-port had long passed and Hawthorne's duties in the Custom House were not too onerous. He has told the story himself in that excellent and slightly spiteful introduction to "The Scarlet Letter" and it is hardly necessary to do more than glance at these years. At first, as usual with him, he was pleased with the

novelty of his position; but as the months crept along and the creative instinct that had flowed so freely at the Old Manse became choked and dammed he experienced again that curious suffocated sensation which was the reaction from uncongenial toil. Sitting in the time-discolored building and observing the dry lot of old pensioners who made the Custom House more a club than a hive of business, plodding through the routine of the day or nosing through the yellowed files of ancient records in the deserted rooms above him, strolling back to the Herbert Street House and later to a home of his own on Chestnut Street and still later to a dwelling on Mall Street which was shared by Madame Hawthorne (now well along in years) and his two sisters, he squandered three seemingly eventless years. Yet vast albeit imperceptible changes were creeping over him and recoloring or rather deepening the already obvious coloring of his somber temperament. Although the shabby facts of daily life impinged drearily on his days it is perceptible now (with the aid of the far perspective of time) that his creative instinct was stretching to its full stature. Perhaps the instinctive rebound from the down-at-heels port and the tobacco-chewing mortals who crossed and recrossed his dreaming vista gave a strange and paradoxical strength to the inner self that was the essential Hawthorne. A great dusky orchid with petals stained by the sad hues of an old New England twilight of the soul was already growing out of the dark soil of the Salem port.

It is unbelievable that the burghers of Salem did

not pause and stare after the Hawthorne of this period, for he must have been an extraordinary figure even in a physical sense. He had a massive head and a broad chest and he walked with a great stride. Although his silence may have been oppressive there was a still daemon that sat behind this veil of wordlessness and looked out with a sharp penetrativeness at the world that surged by so sluggishly. He was a strange lion in captivity. He could not see with the sweet clarity of Emerson, for instance, but his instincts spoke to him constantly and he escaped from his unlovely cage by a swift flight into the empyrean of his imagination. His shyness now had resolved itself into a deliberate preference for solitude although he mingled with some frequency with certain companions at the Custom House and in the taverns. At least, these somewhat illiterate personages could not pick his mind or peer into his inner self. He could maintain his intellectual solitude among them, a thing he could not hope to do if he attempted social incursions on "the" Salem of the day. When Hawthorne, after a three years' tenure of office,, was dislodged from the Custom House through the chicanery of certain individuals a charge of "loafing round with hard drinkers" was brought against him. There was possibly some semblance of fact for this accusation although it was obviously a straw desperately grasped at by those small-town politicians to serve their malicious and personal end. Hawthorne obviously drank (he mentions liquor time and again in his note-books and letters) but

so did everybody else in New England. Longfellow, for instance, had the finest cellar of wine in Cambridge. Hawthorne, however, was never an inordinate tippler. If he had been he could never have done the work that he did.

The three years in the Salem Custom House, therefore, (until the final period of vexed political imbroglio) were dull and quiet. During the summer of 1846 another child, Julian, was born, and Hawthorne now had two children to observe and journalize about. When the family moved into its third Salem residence in a little more than a year, the house on Mall Street, Madame Hawthorne and her two daughters came along, too, and the recluse mother was given a suite to herself quite separate from the rest of the family. There she sat growing weaker as time made its inroads upon her. Hawthorne went out but seldom in the evening although he had become an officer of the Salem Lyceum and sometimes attended lectures there. In November, 1847, he began writing and the result within a year included such productions as "The Snow Image," "The Great Stone Face," "Ethan Brand," and the remainder of the new tales and sketches that were to make up, with some older retrieved matter, his last volume of short pieces of fancy. He found it difficult to compose. It was like wrenching a tooth forth to get an idea out of his head. As a matter of fact he had exhausted himself as a short story writer, and, at the same time, that dark orchid was steadily growing in his mind. In "Endicott and the Red Cross," one of the historical sketches in

"Twice-Told Tales," had appeared the following description of one of the characters in the crowd: "There was likewise a young woman, with no mean share of beauty, whose doom it was to wear the letter A on the breast of her gown, in the eyes of all the world and her own children. And even her own children knew what that initial signified. Sporting with her infamy, the lost and desperate creature had embroidered the fatal token in scarlet cloth, with golden thread and the nicest art of needle-work; so that the capital A might have been thought to mean Admirable, or anything rather than Adulteress." This personage had sunk into Hawthorne's consciousness and his somber imagination, subconsciously at first, perhaps, began to weave the thin veils of romance about it. It was this subject that was tugging at him during the last year or so of his incumbency of the Custom House and when the underhanded political attack reached its head and Hawthorne was cast forth for a second time from the meager bosom of a thankless country, he was, at last, free to begin work upon what was to be his masterpiece. Sophia had put aside a portion of her household expenses each week and this miserable sum, together with a few belated payments from magazines and even a sum made up by friends, carried the much-harassed author through. Hawthorne was forty-five years old in 1849 when he set actively to work on "The Scarlet Letter," the book that was to be the great turning-point in his life.

V

He was not to labor at this work with any degree of ease or liberation of mind. In the first place, he sat in the Mall Street house and wrote against time, against the ominous specter of disaster, and without too much hope for the future. Then, while he was in the midst of his creation, Madame Hawthorne became ill and died. The old lady had gone to join her sailor husband after long years of Hindoo-like solitude and the matriarchal shadow that had cast its somber outline over forty years of Hawthorne's life was removed for all time. The illness and death of his mother created an abrupt hiatus in the progress of "The Scarlet Letter," but, after the last dolorous ceremonies were completed, Hawthorne fled again to the dusky refuge of his theme. Sickness beset the Mall Street house and Hawthorne himself suffered from an intolerable earache. Still the work went on. The more worldly Elizabeth Peabody came to the rescue and wrought some order out of the jangled ill-luck of the ménage. Hawthorne, however, stuck doggedly to his task. He was not sure of himself but he persisted, for the daemon of creation stood at his elbow and whipped him on with a ferocity that it had never exhibited before.

In the early winter of 1849 the bustling Boston publisher, James T. Fields, who had taken over Hawthorne's volumes of short tales from the bankrupt firm of Wiley and Putnam, appeared on the

scene. He came with a burst of enthusiasm and a heartening faith in the Salem writer. The story of the encounter (a momentous one in Hawthorne's career) has been outlined often enough before. Fields found the writer hovering over a stove in his icy study. Hawthorne was in a most despondent frame of mind but Fields strove to cheer him up by persisting that it was time for publication. "Nonsense," gloomed Hawthorne. "What heart have I to write anything, when my publishers have been so many years trying to sell a small edition of the 'Twice Told Tales'?" Fields overrode all of Hawthorne's self-belittlements, his doubts as to a publisher risking money on him, even his intimation that he had written something. There was a bureau in the study and Fields accused Hawthorne of having a manuscript concealed in it. The despondent writer appeared surprised but shook his head, and Fields, knowing that his train would start for Boston soon, rose to go. As the publisher hurried down the stairs he was called back by Hawthorne who thrust a rolled manuscript into his hand, saying: "How, in Heaven's name, did you know this thing was there? As you have found me out, take what I have written, and tell me, after you get home and have time to read it, if it is good for anything. It is either very good or very bad,—I don't know which." On his way to Boston, Fields read the manuscript which proved to be the germ of "The Scarlet Letter."

The entire personality of the Hawthorne of this period is implicit in the story. He is uncertain of

his own powers. He is shy. He is easily discouraged. He is naturally somber. All of these traits are quickened and strengthened by years of solitude that have deprived Hawthorne of the power of estimating himself in comparison with other beings.

Once encouraged, however, Hawthorne returned to his labors, revised his manuscript, and, at the astute suggestion of Fields, enlarged it to novel length. "The Scarlet Letter" had been originally conceived as a longish short story to be included in a projected volume that was to be titled "Old Time Legends: together with Sketches, Experimental and Ideal." Now that it was to occupy a single volume by itself Hawthorne found scope for all of his powers and for all of the nuances of the dark theme that so absorbed him. By February 3, 1850, the final touches were put to the script and in April it was issued from the press in an edition of five thousand copies that were immediately sold out. A new printing was instantly under way. The long years of mere local fame were at an end for Hawthorne and he now stepped (or, rather, was pushed) into the full limelight, such as it was, of the era. "The Scarlet Letter" created a furore and the shy blinking recluse (much to his amazement and rather frightened delight) found himself treading an international stage.

"The Scarlet Letter" is the completest epitome of Hawthorne's genius. It contained all the urges that had made his short tales unique and nothing that he was to do after it revealed any facets that

were not implicit in the curious handling of the tragedy of the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne. Out of this single book the spiritual nature of a man may be deduced with a surprising degree of amplification. Scant attention has been paid in this study to the peculiarities of Hawthorne's short tales and sketches but the arbitrary dismissal of that work was made with a purpose. There is nothing of importance that may be said about the short tales—in so far as an aesthetic and philosophical attitude may be predicated—that may not be indicated in a consideration of "The Scarlet Letter." The man who was to write this novel was adumbrated (dimly and insufficiently enough at times, it must be confessed) in the brief compositions of "Mosses From an Old Manse" and "Twice-Told Tales." In "The Scarlet Letter" the reader of Hawthorne has the first clear fusion of all the writer's virtues as well as those various vices of conception and handling that render his work, in spite of its peculiar excellence, the work of a parochial thinker and artist. Hawthorne never got clear of the entangling dusky web of old New England but he translated the taciturn and repressed passion of that extraordinary corner of the world into a clear albeit darkly stained amber. There is a glow in it but it is never a warm glow. It is a world etched in moonlight and with a thin rain-cloud across the face of that moon, hovering above the tall pine trees and the white spires of many churches.

"The Scarlet Letter," at a first and cursory glance, is the history of a triangle set down in a

New England town during Puritan days. The lover is the young minister, Arthur Dimmesdale; the wife is Hester Prynne, she who wears that badge of shame, the scarlet letter A, embroidered on the bosom of her gown; and the husband is old Roger Chillingworth, the self-appointed physician to Dimmesdale. But a closer reading of the book brings forth the fact that this is a triangle after the event, so to speak. The sin has been committed and Hawthorne is concerned only with the results of that sin, with its mark—growing more and more terrible as time passes—on the two men. His problem, then, is what effect will the consciousness of sin have on these people when one of them is a sensitive and neurotic creature who has concealed his participation in the sin, while another has suffered from the public obloquy of revelation, and a third is an old man eaten up with the jealous madness of revenge. Hester, betrayed by the birth of her illegitimate child, has stood on the pillory with the terrible letter on her breast and has nothing more to face than the slow years of ridicule and the stony path of regeneration. But Dimmesdale, the accomplice in her guilt, preaches each Sunday from the pulpit while the secret consciousness of his sin eats into him. Watching him with a malevolent eye night and day is old Roger Chillingworth, the husband, who waits with a fiendish patience the ultimate resolution of the situation. Hawthorne is not concerned with the sin as a sin. That, curiously enough, was a mere starting point for him and the great passionate love that must have existed between

Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale is but a shadowy specter in the far background of the book. Only once is there a striking reference to it and that is when Hester cries out: "What we did had a consecration of its own. We felt it so! We said so to each other! Hast thou forgotten it?" during her last painful interview with Dimmesdale in the forest. In this flashing instant Hawthorne springs clear of all Puritan influences. But that outbreak —which might be a theme in itself for such a book —is but an instant's flare on the somber highway of "The Scarlet Letter." Hawthorne, after all, is interested only in the effect of the hidden and festering sense of guilt which is slowly consuming Dimmesdale, and, in a last analysis, he becomes the center of the book, although the real protagonist, perhaps, is no more than a little letter embroidered on a bit of cloth. The Puritan consciousness of sin, evinced before in some of Hawthorne's short tales, is the dark thread that the reader follows through the ghostly labyrinth of "The Scarlet Letter."

Hester's guilt is absolved through her public suffering, and her great and noble will and self-command change her very badge of shame into a symbol of a lost world rewon. Yet the problem of her happiness and her love is never resolved. Dimmesdale's problem, one feels, is solved when, at the last, he makes public confessional upon that very pillory where Hester once stood with her child in her arms and endured the mockery of the populace. Even though this confession is the herald of his death it is borne in upon the reader that the

much-tortured minister enters that other world with peace in his heart. As for Chillingworth there is no end to his problem, for his attempted revenge, circumvented at the very last, by Dimmesdale's safety on the pillory from the stings and arrows of men, turns like a ravenous and disappointed hound and rends him apart. Hawthorne was never surer than in the handling of these three people and through the cold moonlight of his imagination they move as abstractions garmented in a chilled semblance of flesh.

The book is a moving series of symbols within a larger symbol from beginning to end. Hawthorne, always concerned with symbols, here brings them to their highest and most concerted pitch. Even as in the short tales he employs concrete objects to illustrate the most abstract end/ The scarlet letter upon Hester's gown is an obsession that possesses a terrible life of its own. It dominates the book, gives a fitful and flaming hue to the texture of the theme, and drives its almost unbearable message into the startled mind of the reader. It is not, as some critics have asserted, overdone except in a single instance. It stands for Hawthorne's conception and, with a surprising artistry, he has grouped his characters about it and put them into the proper relation to it. The one moment in "The Scarlet Letter" when the symbolism seems overforced and difficult to accept is when the phenomenon of the scarlet letter appears in the heavens over the Puritan town. Even Hawthorne would not express this as a fact but intimated a doubt of his own state-

ment. The idea of a scarlet letter burning out of the bosom of Arthur Dimmesdale like some sort of a horrible stigma is not too impossible and it forms a proper and inspired balance to the embroidered insignia on Hester's gown. Here Hawthorne, through a congenital fear of excess, perhaps, was wrong in casting a doubt upon the physical fact. It is invidious to assert that these symbols are weakened because of their obviousness, for, after all, Hawthorne's idea of reality differed in great measures from that of to-day. In "The Scarlet Letter" his characters were the subsidiary counters in a theme and the theme was all.

It is true that these characters are arbitrary manifestations of specific urges, that their reality is extremely thin and that they exist only in so far as their particular position in the tragedy calls for their existence. They are not made of flesh and blood so much as they are made of moonlight and abstract qualities. Little Pearl, for instance, that fantastical dancing cryptically-speaking child belonging to Hester and Dimmesdale, is no more than an animated symbol introduced to emphasize certain important moments in the limited but intense action of the book. Yet she fascinates the reader and is an indubitable part of the theme. And let it be insisted again, the theme is all. No, Hawthorne has not drawn character as character in this book although he was quite capable of creating actual personages. The reality of these characters is implicit in the reality of their emotional and mental reactions and it cannot be gainsaid that Hawthorne has so su-

perbly endowed Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth that they plunge into the consciousness of the reader, impinge upon his brain, so to speak, and remain there fixed and unforgettable.

There is an air of unreality about the entire proceedings but it is less the result of a failure to create living personages in a recognizable milieu than it is the result of a careful aesthetic selectiveness on Hawthorne's part. His three characters—representing three sides to a theme which involves the consciousness of guilt—do not actually exist in a vacuum, but it is true that Hawthorne has subdued their background into a vague picture. The Puritan town is visible but it is sketched hastily and the nonessentials are left out and it is observed, perhaps, through a thin mist. It is like the wood where Pelleas and Melisande meet. Because of this treatment the principal personages stand out in bold relief. It is as though a few characters were down front on a stage and far back of them hung a slightly faded drop-curtain on which was painted the scene of a Puritan town. The few properties, the pillory, a balcony, and such requisites, are brought forth as they are needed and then removed again. There is something Elizabethan in this although the spirit of the book is far from Elizabethan. Elizabethan, too, is the technic of the theme, the presentation, one after another, of a series of selected scenes. Hawthorne's long immersion in short sustained pieces assuredly instigated and crystallized this method of construction, this division of his book into compartments, each compartment giving a rounded picture

in itself. It is a triumph of his artistry that this peculiar method of conceiving a novel does not invalidate the concerted unity of his theme. "The Scarlet Letter" may be a series of pictures, but each picture is so fastidiously related to the one which follows that the mosaic falls into a rounded and reasonable design.

This book, then, written over a period of doubt, death, sickness, financial embarrassment, and spiritual torture, is a clear triumph and vindication of Hawthorne's choice of literature as the objective of his life. He who had started to write because writing came easily to him now found that he had something essential to say. The far-away nebulous objective of some years before had materialized into something huge and visible. He was to go on now and produce two more excellent novels within a short space of time, the urge and the power for sustained labor being mightily strengthened in him by the surprising welcome vouchsafed "The Scarlet Letter." He was still far from being an integral part of the awakened New England impulse (indeed, his sustenance came from the bleak soil of the Puritan days) but that awakened New England could accept him and take as much of him as he was prepared to give.

VI

The belated shift in Hawthorne's fortunes occasioned by the unexpected success of "The Scarlet Letter" had one immediate effect on his life. He could remove from Salem. It cannot be doubted

but that he desired to get away from the frigid atmosphere of his native town. He had never been a part of it and though it attracted him through a cold unemotional tie of kinship, though the dust of his fathers spoke faintly to him from its soil, though the specter of his lonely youth walked its quiet streets in the twilight, he knew that now was the time to break clear and clean from it for all time. The unhappy incidents relating to his dismissal from the Custom House implicated Salem in some measure, and this probably embittered Hawthorne to a certain extent. Salem has been reproached for her aloofness toward her famous son but it must be remembered that Hawthorne never made any particular attempt to orientate himself in the contemporary life of his native town. He kept to himself with an almost fanatical rigor. Salem simply did not know him except as a taciturn, striding figure who dwelt, perhaps, in a cloudy world of his own. Hawthorne's Salem, after all, was the ghost of a Puritan town that loomed nebulously by moonlight amongst the unlovely buildings of the actual community. So far as realities went he had little to do with them and still less affection to bestow upon them.

Therefore, when moneys from "The Scarlet Letter" eased his situation Hawthorne, regretfully freed from the influence of his strange mother and —to his own mind, at least—cast forth by the town of his nativity, looked about him and eventually fixed upon the Berkshire Hills in Western Massachusetts as a likely haven. In the late spring of

1850 he and his family were installed in a small story-and-a-half red brick house in Lenox. A short period of comparative calm became his portion and the quiet family life somewhat freed of financial troubles that ensued must be counted as one of the pleasantest oases in his life. He was now .forty-six years old, a rather grave man who had weathered stormy periods. His health was not as good as it had been and already the disastrous claw of Time was on him. He had but fourteen years of life ahead of him.

Friends surrounded him at Lenox and the hermit was drawn forth in some measure from his dusky cave. He possessed a name and a standing now, and, though his solitary instincts held him somewhat aloof all his days, he managed to achieve a sort of social ease that had never been his portion before. At Pittsfield lived Herman Melville, already at work on his leviathan of novels, "Moby Dick," and a curious friendship sprang up between him and Hawthorne. The emotional exertion seems to have been on Melville's side although it is apparent that Hawthorne responded in a friendly-enough fashion. Anyway, Melville made his frequent appearances and there were long conversations between the two men over a multitude of things including the existence of God. Hawthorne's religious affiliations were neuter. He did not attend church and he did not accept ironbound dogma. He had fought clear of *that* Puritan impulse. He certainly believed in a Divine Providence and his mind was inextricably interwoven with moralistic threads of impulse. But

he was not orthodox in the New England meaning of the word and it is possible that the depths of his intellectual probings contained some astounding and iconoclastic conclusions. Other friends besides Melville called at the red house, especially in the summer, and among these may be enumerated Fanny Kemble, Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Russell Lowell, James T. Fields, John O'Sullivan, Duyckinck, and Whipple. The neighbors were kind and attentive, and, to view the scene as a whole, Hawthorne found himself rather "set" as a literary figure.

Naturally all this was an incentive to further endeavor. He had broken clear of the short sketch or tale in "The Scarlet Letter" and the excitement of discovering a new form in which to express himself,—the novel, heightened the impetus of his creative powers. Ensconced in the rural pleasantry of Lenox he immediately cast about him for a new theme and after the idyllic summer had passed with its soothing freshening of his nature he set to work on "The House of the Seven Gables," beginning it in September and finishing it in January. The book was immediately sent to Fields and as immediately published.

This new novel was a decided shift from the dark symbolism of "The Scarlet Letter." It was a book closer to earth, a work in which a recognizable New England was expressed, although, even here where Hawthorne strove to be as rational as possible, the faint gleam of that unearthly light that colored all of his work is perceptible. His mind moved through

shadows, and, though a gentle humor might sparkle like sunlight through these shadows, it was no stronger than the pale beams piercing a New England forest of high solemn pines. Somewhere there was always silence, solitude, and twilight—the green twilight of the unstirred leaf. This detached and somber aspect of Hawthorne's genius was partly molded by his instinctive desire for solitude. He simply could not be a part of the world about him. He could hover on the edge of it and observe it with some degree of faint amusement but the idea of intellectual participation was repugnant to him. It is true that he possessed a rather inchoate idea of the need of practical labor and that he entered the somewhat dusty corners of public life with the conviction (a rather wobbly one, to be sure) that he was doing his duty; but his true heart was never in these brief flurries. He could divorce his intellectual and creative self from the every-day man and it was only this every-day man that walked the docks of Boston or Salem or sat in the Liverpool Consulate. The intellectual and creative self was lost in a lonely woodland where Time was a dream and life was but the shadow of living.

It was this curious inability to accept life at its face value or to divert his intellectual ardor to the problems of the day that restrained Hawthorne from any participation in the breaking-up of the old New England and the formulation of the new scene. Though the 1830s had ushered in another era, though it had produced a prophet in Emerson,

Hawthorne was congenitally debarred from riding with the vanguard. He continued, instead, to ride his horse of the night and to sit that ghostly steed with a high degree of grace and indifference. The nearest that he could come to reality was in the modern scenes of "The House of the Seven Gables" and "The Blithedale Romance," that was to follow so soon upon the heels of the first-named book. And these modern scenes, so suggestive of the short sketches of his earlier days, were matters of observation, the observations of a solitary man who stands by the wayside and meditates upon the characters who pass by.

"The House of the Seven Gables" is no more than a series of tales relating to one family and tied together by the common heritage of a curse. Hawthorne must have been thinking of the legendary curse uttered against his own family by the condemned witch of long ago when he fixed upon this theme. Though the novel, to all intents and purposes, is the narrative of old Hepzibah Pyncheon's feeble attempt to preserve life in the crumbling house and to usher her brother, Clifford, back into the land of living things after his long years of imprisonment, this theme is dissipated through the insistence on the origin of the curse with its consequent picture of Puritan life. As a novel the book falls to pieces and the reader is confronted with varying ingredients that do not, by any manner of reasoning, form a unified ensemble. How different this is from the coherence of "The Scarlet Letter," which, though also written in separate

scenes, is tightly knit through a single dominating pulse. In this second story the reader has the tale of old Colonel Pyncheon and his usurpation of the land rightfully belonging to Maule, with the consequent curse uttered against the family by the swindled witch, for Maule is convicted of being in league with the devil. Then there is the tale of Alice Pyncheon and the hypnotic influence over her exerted by Maule's descendant. And, thirdly, to use a Biblical phrase not unknown to New Englanders, there is the modern tale of the old house inhabited by Hepzibah, her attempts to earn a livelihood by a penny-store, the return of Clifford from prison, the schemes of Judge Pyncheon to secure the secret to the treasure he imagines concealed in the house, and the removal of the curse by the marriage of Phoebe and Holgrave, the two representing the Pyncheon and Maule families respectively.

All of this is loosely tied together and the reader's interest in it is compelled through a series of delicately conceived pictures and every-day scenes. Such minor figures as Uncle Venner and little Ned Higgins stand out in more life-like quality than Clifford or Holgrave. One thing Hawthorne does do that is of prime importance, a thing that opened the door to following generations of novelists,—he permeates his modern story with what Henry James would call "the sense of the past." Indeed, Hawthorne, so identified with the past in New England, so wrapped up in it, so to speak, might be expected to do just this thing and in "The House of the Seven Gables" he did it with an admirable delicacy

and subtle sense of values. The Past, that curious groping chimera invisible to the eye but felt as a stark presence, prowls through the ancient seven-gabled house and makes the dwelling its own. It subdues the atmosphere to its peculiar emanations. It fastens itself upon the intelligence and subconscious gestures of the beings who inhabit the house. It merges with their spirits and becomes a part of them. There is something unearthly about this, something that translates the personages of the narrative into sensibilities trembling on the verge of an unseen world. As the mournful and bitter consciousness of the slowly-devouring sense of sin dominated "The Scarlet Letter" so does the shadowy and impalpable sense of the past invade and permeate "The House of the Seven Gables."

The characters themselves are nearer the frank realities of living than the few figures who walk so like ghosts through "The Scarlet Letter." Hepzibah Pyncheon is a triumph of portraiture. She is the withered and retired old maid blinking furiously in the light of day and long ago diverted from the practical problem of living. No one knew better than Hawthorne the curious fright of solitary people suddenly thrust into the maelstrom of contemporary existence, for he possessed three women in his own family who were somewhat tempered by a drastic abnegation of the world. It would be a gross exaggeration to insist upon a likeness between Hepzibah and Madame Hawthorne, for instance, and yet is it not possible that the novelist could better plumb the depths of Hepzibah because of his knowledge

of his own mother? Certainly Hepzibah is drawn with a confident strength of characterization that is not to be found in any of the other people who circle about the seven-gabled house. Phoebe is the typical "good little maid," full of sunlight and cheeriness, that Hawthorne uses again and again to set off the darker hues of his more somber women. She stands to Hepzibah as Priscilla stands to Zenobia in "The Blithedale Romance" or as Hilda stands to Miriam in "The Marble Faun." These young girls are not cut actually from the same piece of cloth, for as characters they are well differentiated. Their likeness is implicit in the fact that they are all young New England girls essentially "good" and that all of them perform the function of foils to more somber and stronger-willed women who are made unusual through remarkable traits. Judge Pyncheon is not as convincing as either Hepzibah or Phoebe, and this is curious in that Judge Pyncheon was undoubtedly drawn from life. The explanation of this unreality seems to lie in the fact that Hawthorne's model was a man against whom he had a grievance (he was one of the men who played his part in ousting Hawthorne from the Salem Custom House) and that, therefore, there was a deal of vinegar mixed with the novelist's ink. The Judge becomes a rather stagy villain with a few Dickensian attributes. His pompous hypocrisy is emphasized to the detriment of reality. The other characters, Clifford and Holgrave, are thin and ineffectual figures realized only in so far as they

perform certain functions in the working-out of the theme.

Certain attributes render "The House of the Seven Gables" Hawthorne's most representative book, the work best revealing his peculiar approach to life and letters. It was not without a rare self-understanding that he preferred this novel to his other achievements. In the first place, it is crammed with those small and carefully-conceived vignettes of observation that form so large a part of Hawthorne's instinctive art. A village street or a garden or a passing boy buying gingerbread figures or an old man meditating on the poor-house, these things found in Hawthorne a ready and sympathetic observer. They were the small phenomena of a New England town that he might see from the road-side and put down with a gentle humor and somewhat fastidious reserve in his note-books. No writer has bettered this particular style of writing in the long history of New England letters. It is limited, of course, limited as New England is limited to a certain "feel," and Hawthorne never got beyond this parochialism. Even when he was writing about England, as in "Our Old Home," or about Italy, as in "The Marble Faun," it was still the parochial New Englander writing, a New Englander, to be sure, on tour but still a man with the limited horizon of the born Salemite. Within his peculiar limits he rarefied and burnished his material to a point of high excellence, and, by the compelling astuteness of his aesthetic proclivities, lifted it to a plane that before him had not existed in New England, and

which, relatively, could bear comparison with the best examples of English genre writing. "The House of the Seven Gables" is, therefore, an important book in the history of Hawthorne's intellectual career. It does not touch that bitterly unified peak of "The Scarlet Letter" but it is more revelatory of the writer's talent, more the "sort" of book for which he was equipped. It was not a book over which Hawthorne and Sophia might weep (as they did over "The Scarlet Letter" which must have been a great release for the novelist's welled-up and inhibited passion) but it was one that they could relish in the doing as a most satisfactory enunciation of Hawthorne's intelligence, sensitivity to local values, and twilit artistry.

VII

The completion of "The House of the Seven Gables" found Hawthorne ready for the green solace of country peace. He was tired out now and it was time to draw in sail a bit and let the spring and summer be a sea of flowers and pastimes upon which to drift with his children until his drained resources again filled up. In May his third child, Rose, was born. The red house rang to the laughter of small people and Hawthorne fashioned toy boats and kites, went fishing and flower-gathering, and even strove (unsuccessfully, it appears) to teach his son and daughter how to swim. It was all idyllic, a far removal from the vexatious months in Salem. Hawthorne, freed in some measure from the intol-

erable vicissitudes of fortune in a corner of the world that had little to give the purely imaginative, found himself in comparative peace. It is true that he had the livelihood of his family to consider. He could not lecture as Emerson did or manage a college department as Longfellow but he could write and, though writing might seem a rather pusillanimous method of earning a living to a hard-shell New Englander, he made the most of his gift. By early summer his fingers itched for the quill-pen again and in six weeks in June and July he drafted "A Wonder-Book for Boys and Girls." His four months playtime came to an end.

The surprising ease with which he wrote this volume of ancient myths retold is adequate testimonial to his pleasure in the task. Hawthorne, it is very apparent, loved children. There was a gentle and simple side to his nature and it found its fullest release in his reactions toward little ones. He was a companion to his own offspring and he enjoyed nothing better than to journalize about them, to set down their remarks, to describe their various gestures. It is here, perhaps, that the fact might be noted that Hawthorne was not the dour pessimist that some commentators have suggested. He was morbid because he was unsure of his own abilities and he was restrained and silent because of long years of solitude and an inability to adjust himself to the social free-for-all of the day. But there is no reason to believe that he was particularly dour in the bosom of his family and he gave ample evidence of a sense of humor that sparkles like young

sunlight through his books. It is true that he was naturally attracted to somber themes but it is equally true that he detached himself from these themes in a manner that few born New Englanders colored by ancient tradition could do. He stood beside his dusky creations and was not an integral part of them. It was so with life. He stood always at the side of life and never entered into it with that completeness of submersion that marked some of his companions in letters. Though he might be one in a group he never partook of the group spirit.

After he had completed "A Wonder-Book for Boys and Girls," (and there is nothing to say about that work or its sequel, "Tanglewood Tales," except that it is written with a sunny freshness and a gentle New Englandism that quite translates the pagan myths into innocent fables) he had the fullest opportunity to enjoy life with his son, for Sophia and the two daughters, Una and Rose, went East for a three-weeks' visit with the Peabody family. Hawthorne was left alone with Julian and the old negro cook and the result was a journal of some length describing the adventures of the masculine household. This inveterate habit of journalizing about the most inconsequential things was an integral part of Hawthorne's nature. Of course, in the New England of the 1840s and 50s the diary and day-book played a much more important part in life than it does to-day when mankind is too busy to set down the peccadilloes and scattered thoughts. It was quite the habit to keep a journal. Nearly all of the literary figures did. Hawthorne, however,

was peculiarly susceptible to journalizing, for like most solitary men he could not dissipate his countless thoughts and observations in conversations. There was always a great residue left over for the pages of the note-book. It was the perfect refuge of the shy man.

As the autumn of 1851 advanced a restlessness pervaded Hawthorne. He had never stayed very long in any place except for the desolate years of his youth in Salem and now he felt again the call to transplant himself. The red house at Lenox had served its purpose. The weather was growing inclement. It was time to turn east again where most of his friends (or, rather, friendly acquaintances) were situated. Toward the last of November, then, he packed his family goods and removed to the dismal town of West Newton. This was but a temporary refuge for Hawthorne intended to buy a house, and West Newton, where he was put up by the Peabodys', was as good a spot as any from which to reconnoiter the surrounding territory. He would not go back to Salem for he had conceived a sort of mild hatred of the place and the family ties were broken. Madame Hawthorne was dead. His sister, Louisa, was still living in Salem with relatives, but Elizabeth was installed with a farmer's family on the coast not far from Salem, where she lived out her lonely existence over a period of thirty years.

Naturally Hawthorne was revolving a new book in his mind. West Newton was near Brook Farm and this may have accelerated the idea of "The

Blithedale Romance," although it is impossible not to believe that this book was in his consciousness before he came east. After "A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys" he had arranged a volume of tales, "The Snow Image, and Other Twice-Told Tales," but, except for a few of these stories, this matter had been dredged from old periodicals. Therefore, it did not represent any part of the growth and progress that was going on at this time. He was still concerned with extended work for the double success of "The Scarlet Letter" and "The House of the Seven Gables" had been an exhilarating factor in convincing him that the novel, after all, was his particular forte. He needed little encouragement to sit down to "The Blithedale Romance," and this was his occupation during the winter at West Newton. It is possible that he took a few walks over to Brook Farm in order to refresh his mind regarding certain aspects of the community where he had marked time before his marriage. But these walks were hardly necessary. His mind contained all that he needed of Brook Farm for "The Blithedale Romance," after all, was not a specific picture of anything that had happened but a story that needed a retired scene for its peculiar enhancement. The book was issued in May, 1852, and it proved to be neither so good as "The Scarlet Letter" nor so atmospherically compelling as "The House of the Seven Gables."

Yet it possessed one attribute which cannot be discovered in either of the two previous novels. It was a book written more in sunlight. The light of

day floods it to a greater extent than may be discovered in "The Scarlet Letter," where life is observed through a gray Puritan twilight, or "The House of the Seven Gables," where the vague chimaera of the Past stalks invisibly through the shifting scenes. Hawthorne, in "The Blithedale Romance," strove to be as rational as he could. He attempted reality with none of those vague overtones that are so integral a portion of his creative personality. However, he was not a realist and never could be one. Though he might observe with a discerning eye and set down small facts with an artistic punctiliousness his comprehension of reality was obfuscated by an indecisive romanticism that wavered between two worlds. The prime objective of "The Blithedale Romance" was to present the self-destruction of a typical New England reformer through his selfish fanaticism toward his own theory of philanthropism. Hollingsworth was not a characterization which could engage Hawthorne's imaginative sympathies with any high degree of sympathy or emotional reaction and this is felt in a reading of the book. He is real enough but one senses only a half-interested author behind his creation. Worst of all, this man, who is the real protagonist of the novel, is surrounded by the material of another type of book altogether, the relations between Zenobia and Priscilla, the mesmerism and Veiled Lady appanages, and the generally fantastic qualities that probably appealed much more to Hawthorne than the social experiment of Brook Farm or the philanthropic fanaticism of

Hollingsworth. Because of this bad mingling of elements the book is immeasurably weakened and it comes as a distinct anticlimax to "The Scarlet Letter" and "The House of the Seven Gables."

Yet there is much to hold the reader here. That peculiar charm which Hawthorne diffused over his work is always present. There are several strongly-wrought scenes, the chief one being that of the suicide of Zenobia, a tragedy suggested by Hawthorne's own activities some years before at Concord in rescuing the body of a suicide-girl. And there are certain characterizations that insist upon seeping into the reader's mind. Hollingsworth himself may be no more than an incomplete portrait but surely in Miles Coverdale there is more than a hint of Hawthorne himself. As to Zenobia, it is futile to inquire as to whether or not she is based upon Margaret Fuller. Certain of her attributes would suggest as much. She is, in effect, that large, dark, handsome woman with a secret past who charmed the imagination of Hawthorne so often and who appeared in such completeness and complexity in "The Marble Faun" as Miriam. It was in such types as this that Hawthorne's innate romanticism was given its fullest vent.

As usual, "The Blithedale Romance" is set in a pocket of time, so to speak, and removed from the rest of the world. The small group of characters play out their drama aided and abetted with a few subsidiary personages. They are unrelated to the great mass of existence. Hawthorne always isolated his characters in this way and fashioned the

scenes wherethrough they walked into subdued backgrounds. The reader, therefore, who expects any sort of adequate approximation of the socialistic experiment of Brook Farm in this novel will be disappointed for it is not there at all. He will find a semi-romantic tale of two sisters interwoven with the emotional devastation that Hollingsworth, the reformer, leaves in his trail. And he will find a deal of Hawthorne's moral energy and indignation against an over-zealous and rabid instinct for the betterment of mankind. These major trends, together with the usual pertinent vignettes of life, make up the book. It is not a great book as "The Scarlet Letter" certainly is or an amazingly good book as "The House of the Seven Gables" is, but it is an adequate book and it is full of a sunlight and humor that neither one of the earlier novels contained.

With "The Blithedale Romance" Hawthorne's active years as a writer came to an end. He had turned out three novels in as many years and it was, perhaps, time to halt. He was getting weary and his health was not as excellent as it had been although on the surface he gave no immediate signs of a debilitated constitution. While he was laboring at this last novel he had purchased The Wayside at Concord from Bronson Alcott and early in June the family removed to it from West Newton. There he started to work on a new series of retold myths to be called "Tanglewood Tales." Early in the summer his sister, Louisa, was drowned when she leaped from a burning steamer in the Hudson

River. For a time Hawthorne was desolate. Grief always oppressed him and drove him back into his cave of loneliness there to brood upon the horrors of circumstances. But he was drawn forth from this by the advent of a political campaign, the result of which was to cause the greatest change of all in his life. His old friend, Franklin Pierce, now General Pierce of Mexican War fame, became a candidate for President of the United States and Hawthorne was approached to write the campaign biography of the hero.

Hawthorne was a child so far as politics went. He was reactionary in his inclinations, his blood running too cold to urge him into such foreign matters as liberalism and progress. It was not so much that he disapproved of progress as that he was congenitally incapable of working up any enthusiasm over it. He suspected change as do most men who live very much in the past. The idea, for instance, of becoming an active Abolitionist would have been anathema to him. He was content, in large measure, to see the world drift along provided his particular environment did not suffer any sea-change into something foreign and strange. Now Pierce was pretty much of a reactionary but it is doubtful that Hawthorne took this to mind very much when he agreed to do the campaign biography. The thing that counted, after all, was friendship and Pierce had been his warm friend over a period of many years. It made no difference that the great majority of literary men were anti-Pierce. Party-lines were but tiny things after all where friendship

was concerned. Hawthorne put away his unfinished "Tanglewood Tales" and did the best that he could do with the rather undistinguished life of his friend.

The product was unimportant but apparently it did its little share, for Pierce was elected President and was accordingly grateful to Hawthorne. The novelist, of course, knew when he wrote the book that if Pierce was elected he (Hawthorne) would probably receive some plum of an appointment. Indeed, it was because of this probable reward that Hawthorne expressed some unwillingness to put forth his effort. He desired it to be understood that his incursion into political writing was occasioned by friendship and not for a possible reward. However, the reward was to come. After the campaign biography was finished Hawthorne turned back to the uncompleted script of "Tanglewood Tales," finished it, and dispatched it to his publisher. The winter crept along and life went on quietly at The Wayside. In the early spring, Mrs. Peabody, Sophia's mother, died and a touch of sadness limited the simple pleasures of the household. President Pierce nominated Hawthorne to the Consulate at Liverpool and on March 26, 1853, the nomination was confirmed by Congress. At first, Hawthorne, still rankling at the thought of being rewarded for an act of friendship, was disposed to refuse the proffered honor but his publisher, Fields, a man of great common sense, convinced him that his duty to his family forbade any such refusal. It is to be suspected that Hawthorne did not need any strong arguments, for a peculiar vein of practicality often

revealed itself in his thinking. He was not a practical man but he believed that he ought to be one and he made decided efforts to achieve that status, a status so praised in old New England.

This appointment marked the practical end of Hawthorne's career as a literary man in New England. He was still to write one of his most important novels but that was to be done in England after a long Italian sojourn and never again was he to do anything memorable in the quiet harborage of a New England home. He had lived through the great day of his corner of the world, that era stretching from 1830 to the late 50s which had brought to birth all the great New England figures, and he had hardly been touched by it. Yet it had prepared him an audience and it had made possible his very existence. He was to leave New England now with regret for the quietude of The Wayside (for he was, at best, a Wayside man) but with some anticipation of the foreign scene. There was not, it may be suspected, much intellectual ardor urging him toward Europe. He was too old for that. A man on the verge of fifty years is not looking for new intellectual angles or for reorientation in the scheme of things. But he was curious about Europe, especially England, and possibly he imagined that he might find a stimulus of sorts in the antiquity of the Old Country. Then, too. he possessed an obvious wanderlust. He had never lived very long in one place and though his wanderings had hitherto, with a few negligible exceptions, been confined to New England a restlessness constantly

stirred within him. It must be remembered that a long line of seafaring Hathornes had preceded him, that these men had sailed distant seas and seen strange sights. Some of that old magic may have lingered in the blood of the rather tired middle-aged novelist who boarded the steamship "Niagara," Captain Leach commanding, on a sunshiny day in the latter part of June, 1853. Surrounded by his wife and three children and numberless boxes and receptacles he must have stood on the deck looking back a little bewildered at Bunker Hill.

CHAPTER THREE

I

AMERICANS had gone to Europe before and Americans have gone since but it is doubtful if any figure quite comparable to Nathaniel Hawthorne has ever turned a mildly speculative eye upon the English scene. He was, in effect, a walking epitome of Puritan urges which were softened and rendered malleable by a congenital aesthetic consciousness. This man, standing on the verge of fifty years, with a typical New England wife of dilettante propensities and three small children, a recognized force in his own particular milieu, was curiously inhibited in his belated voyage of discovery to the Old World. He possessed neither the youthful zest of a Longfellow who had preceded him nor the analytic doggedness of a Henry James who was to follow him. He was, as they say in New England, "set" in his prejudices and matured capabilities of receptivity. It was quite impossible for him to strike an impartial attitude or to put himself in the other fellow's place or to plumb the deep well of English culture or to adjust his mentality to the daily phenomena of a scene that was both tantalizingly like and irritatingly unlike some few aspects of New England. The England of the late

1850s was a stage of industrial domination in many ways. It was the mid-Victorian era of smugness and squirearchy and Prince Albert and dull rectitude and the novels of Anthony Trollope. The laxness of the earlier era had been stifled by the righteous tidal wave of Victorian morals. The Queen had come fully into her own, and, with her darling Albert by her side, stood as the Guardian Angel of the Home. Life—at least in theory—was all roast-beef and goodness. Hawthorne undoubtedly sensed the "feel" of English life but he was incapable of orientating himself in it or drawing any lessons from it. In spite of his position in Liverpool as the representative of a foreign government and therefore a cog in the commercial wheel of the dirty city his four years in the Consulate never found him very far from the rôle of a tourist. He was on the outside always.

The Liverpool Consulate he found very similar to the Salem Custom House. It was the same old story of dreary details with dreary people in a dreary office. There was one outstanding difference, however, and that was when the clerk each afternoon brought in the neat rouleaux of gold and silver and copper which were Hawthorne's perquisites for the day. It was for this rather than for the glory of the Republic that the novelist—now stifled into silence for a number of years—endured his dull task. He saw before him the opportunity for financial freedom from material worries and in that freedom the prospect of greater literary endeavors. At the same time he must have suspected

that his creative powers were weakening, that the three novels he had drawn forth from a reservoir that was deep rather than wide had nearly exhausted him, and that his health was steadily diminishing within his still sturdy form. The shadow of time was on him already although he had touched but half a century of years. Passing from Rock Park across the Mersey to Liverpool it is possible that he dreamed at times of the blessed freedom of the pen although we may be sure that he did not look back with too fond an eye on those comparatively free days at the Old Manse and in Lenox. He did not find a spiritual release in England but, at the same time, he exhibited but little nostalgia for New England. Rather was his dream of Italy and sunlit days unalloyed with tasks and obligations. Perhaps he did not realize that his greatest obligation was the obligation of his birth and that he would have to carry *that* wherever he traveled. His love for New England was a cold love and it was impossible for him, at his age and with his fixed outlook, to work up any great enthusiasm over any other land. He was on the outside of everything except himself and he was very much inside of himself. It was both his curse and the secret of his genius. Man of solitude as he was, he had ossified into the eternal observer, the creature who looks fixedly but who does not partake. He saw England, then, as a foreign scene, as a spectacle into which he could merge by no manner of means. It was as though he had wandered upon a huge stage during a

play and was mingling rather helplessly and critically among the actors.

Yet he had his social moments. He ventured upon dinners and visits and trips and even made a few speeches, discovering to his own bloodless satisfaction that he could get through a harangue without breaking down. At the same time he was possibly more at home with the piratical-looking sailors who crowded the Consulate and the swindling Americans who ran to him for aid which they rarely repaid. His few friends, notably Henry Bright and Francis Bennoch, sponsored him to some degree and led him into social bypaths that, perhaps, he never would have ventured upon by himself. He had ample opportunity, therefore, to embark upon a close study of mid-Victorian life, to elucidate it to himself, and to compare it with the New England scheme of living. It is true that his voluminous note-books continued to grow during this period, that he set down the various scenes and characters with whom he came into contact; still, there was no high degree of analysis perceptible. He saw all these things, saw them with a disconcertingly acute eye at times and set them down with a fine freedom of utterance, but he hardly profited by them. It was impossible for him to make a cosmopolite of himself; to the last he would remain a provincial figure wandered out of his New England milieu, a little restive occasionally at what he considered foreign barbarisms, a little villagy in his acceptance of the color and thunder of those great cities that heretofore had been no more to him

than figments out of books. He was uneasy before the spectacle of Europe although his uneasiness was repressed by a certain gracefulness of demeanor, a dark and silent grace, to be sure. He could not drink in color and sound with an eager and romantic expectancy as Longfellow had done years before and neither could he race from notability to notability with letters of introduction as that more successful and urban-minded poet did. Hawthorne may not have been more doubtful of himself than Longfellow but he was certainly less volatile. The strong hand of custom drew him back into the twilight of his solitude and from that shadowy thicket he peered out at the world.

During Hawthorne's tenure of office he traveled through various portions of England, the Isle of Man, Wales, the Lake Country, London, and what he observed was put down carefully in his note-books. He could appreciate and understand the shifting vistas of landscape and ancient edifices but he could not realize that deeply-rooted sense of the Past which quickened about him wherever he went. Superficially he comprehended the ancient foundations of England but he was not excited by them. They brought him no message and inspired no pulse in him to faster beating. He was coldly observant of this as he was of the contemporary flurry of mid-Victorian life about him for the same reason,—namely, that he had congealed within, that he was irretrievably molded for better or for worse by the opportunities and vicissitudes of his fifty years of life in New England, a life passed in villages and

amidst rural scenes. Until he came to England the largest city with which he had been in any way familiar was Boston and the Boston of the 1840s was in no sense of the word a metropolis. It was an overgrown town with all of the impulses of a town. Hawthorne had never been able to lift himself beyond the boundaries of the New England town, although his unquestionable genius had plumbed the depths of that particular Puritan nature that had made the New England town possible. His knowledge of the great world was narrow and one-sided and flawed by parochial impulses but this limitation did not invalidate his probings into the New England soul with its omnipresent consciousness of sin. He was a portion, although a detached portion, of the Puritan tradition and when he adjusted himself to it he could work miracles with his pen. But he was not, *distinctly* not, a portion of the Victorian scene (as a good Victorian he never would have dismissed Hester Prynne's sin so easily) and, therefore, he could not adjust himself to it. He could do no more than stand by, praise a little, blame a little, and wish—in the depths of his nature—that he were somewhere else. England miserably failed to reanimate his creative powers. Or, to put it another way, he miserably failed to take advantage of the English scene, a thing that is curious in a New Englander when we realize that he did strive to profit by the Italian scene in "The Marble Faun."

During the years he lived in England, Hawthorne also failed to take advantage of the opportunity to

meet the prime literary figures of the day. He never talked with Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, Tennyson, Swinburne, Arnold, or George Eliot. It is possible that he had no curiosity about them, that he felt them to be outside of his orbit. It is also possible that his years of solitude had hardened a certain sense of inferiority in him and that he felt he had nothing to give to these figures so to the fore. A sense of his village origins, of his social uncouthness, of his dispirited appearance in public, these things, too, may have had something to do with it. He satisfied himself with secondary figures, paying calls on old Leigh Hunt and that mid-Victorian fount of treacle, Martin Tupper, and meeting at dinner-parties Charles Reade and Douglas Jerrold and the Brownings. Richard Monckton Milnes, Lord Houghton, was one of the few English writers who strove to put himself out for Hawthorne but the American was so gloomy in receiving Milnes' well-meant effort that the Englishman thought he was disliked by his taciturn companion. It is quite possible that Hawthorne would have disapproved of some of the famous English figures he did not meet. Swinburne was but a boy in his early twenties and had published nothing, although he was somewhat of a phoenix at Balliol. It is safe to say that Hawthorne would never have liked Swinburne's early poetry. Thackeray might have appeared too cynical and Dickens too vulgar. As for George Eliot, had she not been guilty of certain iconoclasms in domestic life? Trollope, however, might have pleased

Hawthorne and it is regrettable that these two men, one of them the peculiar representative of the old New England tradition and the other the expositor of mid-Victorianism in fiction, did not meet and discourse about life and letters. As it was, Hawthorne's only close connection with English literary life was his imbroglio with Delia Bacon, an affair in which he lost a thousand dollars by backing the lady's book on the Bacon-Shakespeare theory and the lady's friendship as well by his lukewarm preface to the book.

In October, 1855, Sophia Hawthorne sailed to Lisbon where she remained as a guest of the O'Sullivans until June, 1856. Hawthorne, left with his son, led a fairly quiet life but after Sophia's return with her two daughters he began to bethink himself about his place and its monetary prospects. His emoluments had already been cut down by an act of Congress and, long before this, Hawthorne had become completely fed up with his job. Liverpool, to him, was a dirty hole. His restlessness was on him again, that restlessness which had taken him from Salem to Boston to Brook Farm to Concord to Salem to Lenox to West Newton to Concord to Liverpool. It was time to pack his household effects and remove elsewhere. Four years seems to have been Hawthorne's limit for holding any position and this, after all, is quite as long as any born writer should keep his creative gifts in subjection to his need for material aggrandisement. In the autumn of 1856, therefore, when James Buchanan was elected President and the weak Pierce was blessedly

removed from office, Hawthorne decided to resign his place as Consul at Liverpool and to depart via France to Italy. He had already laid aside quite a sum of money for him and he could afford to look toward the immediate future with some degree of complacency and ambition. In a literary sense he had nothing to show for these four years except his note-books and journals out of which he was to subsequently dredge the essays that made up the volume called "Our Old Home," but it is certain that the idea of writing a new book was ticking somewhere in the back of his brain. He did not know what it was to be about, and, perhaps, he dimly imagined that Italy would supply the seed for it. Then, again, there is reason to believe that he had an English romance in mind. Anyway he looked forward to the Latin south with some degree of anticipation. It was to be a carefree time and he was to be master of himself and his days.

He did not look back at England with any regret as he set forth early in January, 1858, for the Continent. He had not been too unhappy in the "tight little isle" but neither had he been unduly worked up over the Victorian scene. His vague and tentative inroads on the intellectual life of England had been disappointing so far as he was concerned but this was, after all, his own fault. He had dodged the real intellectual life, fought shy of its social obligations, and failed to encounter those personalities who might best of all have represented intelligent mid-Victorian England to him. Instead of the larger figures he had been content with a third-

rate poet like Milnes or a second-rate novelist like Reade or a journalist like Jerrold or a purveyor of pap like Tupper. Part of his abstinence from the intellectual scene was his own inveterate shyness, the result of his long years of solitude. He didn't like people to take an interest in him as an extraordinary figure and that, after all, was the only reason why any intelligent Englishman should take an interest in this quaint New Englander. "It is ungracious, even hoggish," he wrote in his note-book, "not to be gratified with the interest they expressed in me; but then it is really a bore, and one does not know what to do or say. I felt like the hippopotamus, or—to use a more modest illustration—like some strange insect imprisoned under a tumbler, with a dozen eyes watching whatever I did." It is exactly this "one does not know what to do or say" phrase that explains a part of Hawthorne's awkwardness in public. It was because of this that the well-meaning Milnes misunderstood him. That bewildered gentleman must have felt as though he were leading about a bear with a sore nose. Hawthorne's experiences in England, then, were one-sided because of his own one-sidedness. He could not slide into the intellectual current. He could observe, but as everything is not on the surface in life he was bound, because of his method of observation, to misapprehend many things. It was a man who had not actually been a part of English life in spite of his four years' residence who hurried through Paris southward to Rome.

II

Rome! The Eternal City! *Mater Triumphalis!* We may imagine Hawthorne (and his wife in particular) scurrying south through Paris, through Lyons, through Marseilles, across the wine-dark sea of Ulysses, with pauses at Genoa and Leghorn and Civita Vecchia, to the City of the Seven Hills, thrilled with the prospect of historical and artistic and blithe Latin intimacies. We may imagine this but the actual picture of Hawthorne's venture upon Rome is something else altogether. What we do see is a sneezing, influenza-ridden gentleman in his mid-fifties huddled before an ineffectual fire ungratefully deciding that "Old Rome lies like a dead and mostly decayed corpse, retaining here and there a trace of the noble shape it was, but with a sort of fungus growth upon it, and no life but of the worms that creep in and out." And another sneeze nearly demolishes the feeble pretense of a fire!

It was in the midst of a cold, sleety rainstorm that the Hawthornes reached Rome and for some time thereafter the arctic weather retained its throttling hold on the joyous southern city of ruins, carnivals, and popes. The fountains of the Piazza were frozen and dirty little urchins were sliding on the ice. It was the dirt in Rome that made the first impression on Hawthorne. As he perambulated through the streets he looked down oftener than he looked up. Sophia might fly into rhapsodies

over the Coliseum, St. Peter's, the Forum, and a hundred and one other sights but the observing realist in Hawthorne, unlifted by tourist-gush, saw a swarming unwashed humanity crowding through narrow, unclean thoroughfares. While the ruins were not exactly heaps of heathen rocks to him we may be sure that he did not find in them those lofty sermons in stones that the sensitive and idealistic observer is supposed to discover in Rome. He revered antiquity but this was an antiquity that was a stranger to his peculiar cast of mind. He needed an abrupt adjustment to it before he let himself go with any degree of emotion. Settled down in lodgings in the Via Porta Pinciana (where he remained for three months) he strove, therefore, in a rather coldly critical frame of mind, to adjust his New England temperature to the Roman scene.

He saw everything, of course. During this first tenure in the Holy City he probably tramped hundreds of miles, pausing before numberless ruins, exploring scores of broad streets and narrow alleys, dragging his way through leagues of picture galleries, peering into dozens of churches. He was the dogged sightseer determined to see all that there was to see and to give Rome its chance, as it were, to make what impressions it might on his securely-set temperament. Sophia must have kindled the urge of curiosity in him to some extent for she was the rather lush dilettante, ultra-sensitive to the appeal of pictures and properly impressed by antiquities. Dabbling in drawing herself and blessed with an untrained taste in such aesthetic emanations she

performed the function of an excellent foil to Hawthorne's deadened aesthetic sensitivity before the Italian masterpieces. He was a stranger in a strange land and he knew it. England, after all, had been England, the mother-country from which his own blood had originally come and where the language was his own; Italy was something outlandishly new, a land with no points of contact for him, no reminders of his own past, and practically nothing to meet his half-formulated desires. Hawthorne could not meet on a common-ground with the Italian temperament. In England he could carp at the natives for he possessed some sort of vantage-point from which to observe them; they were, after all, animals rather similar to himself. Italy, however, could be viewed without the critical malice of one who "belongs." He could stand before the Roman scene supremely untouched, as a man stands before a puppet-show, and like it or not, approve or disapprove, much as he pleased. This must have given him a sense of solitary freedom more perfect than he had ever experienced either in New England or old England. He was in no sense of the word a part of the picture and this very sensation of being so unrelated to his environment thrust him into more amiable social relations with the American-English colony in Rome than he had ever ventured on before.

Two dominating aspects of the Roman scene forced themselves sharply into his consciousness and he must have given them a great deal of thought. They were religion and art. Although Hawthorne had fought shy of church-going all his

life it was perceptible in his life, his letters, and his books that the Puritan consciousness had deeply invaded his intelligence and his spirit. He had reached maturity in a land of unadorned churches, where religion was a matter of exposition and rigorous abnegation of gauds and liturgies and colored shows. Yet the spectacle of the Roman Catholic Church with its bells, its censers of curling aromatic smoke, its chanting priests and monks, its wandering friars, its gorgeous vestments and sacramental vessels, its mystery of the mass, its inspired pictures, and its reassuring doctrines of papal infallibility and the blessed absolution of the confessional, reached subtly into the aesthetic mysticism of his nature. He realized that Protestants were all choked up, so to speak, and with no emotional outlet for their inhibited natures. It was only in witch-burnings and repressed hysterics and dry expositions of doctrine and gloomy meditations which stifled the quivering soul that the Puritans might give vent to the subterranean passions that shook them inwardly. But the Roman Catholic Church was different. It offered a series of brightly-hued safety-valves for the emotions of mankind. The laden soul might fling itself upon Mother Church and find appeasement there. It might come forth from the confessional cleansed in spirit and free in mind. It was this realization that occasioned that daring expedient (at least for Hawthorne) in "The Marble Faun" of having Hilda lift the weight of guilty knowledge from her soul in the confessional booth. Hawthorne's sensitivity toward the Roman Catholic

Church was the direct result of his brooding observation. He comprehended better than most of his New England contemporaries how much the solitary man perplexed with the incubus of sin might relieve himself through the soothing ministrations of the confessor. It was a long way for a man brought up in the old Puritan tradition to go, but Hawthorne, at least, achieved a broken glimpse of that deep mystic foundation upon which the invulnerable strength of the Roman Catholic Church is based.

He was less certain about art, for he did not really comprehend the purpose of art. Technique as such and the value of the picture in itself for what it was meant little to him. After he grew to understand in some measure the mysteries of the church his pedestrian attitude before pictures was tempered. He could rise to the occasion with some degree of aesthetic comprehension. He saw obliquely, to be sure, and his glimpses were but fragmentary. Still, in the end, he realized in some measure the immeasurable phenomena of art. However, he was really too old to suffer a sea-change from what he was into anything different. He had been under Puritan influences too long and his course had been somewhat shaped before his birth. It is the peculiar failing of the Puritan temperament to be quite unable to understand the importance of technique in any work or to realize the value of a thing in itself for its sheer beauty. There must always be a purpose behind the object, a moral somewhere implied. Hawthorne ran true to form when he was before pictures or sculpture and the works that pleased him

most were those that suggested a moral or that were rather sentimentally disposed. He did not express any predilection for pure art or expatiate on the supreme cleverness of technique, a rather peculiar failure on the part of a man who took so much pains with his own prose. It must be remembered, however, that his prose was nearly always a means to an end which betrayed a moral. The moral was not always a clean-cut New England moral but Hawthorne was in vague rebellion against the iron-bound doctrines of his own community. In no clearer or more ridiculous manner were Hawthorne's shortcomings as an appreciator of art to be found than in his attitude toward nude sculpture. "Man is no longer a naked animal," he expostulated, "his clothes are as natural to him as his skin, and sculptors have no more right to undress him than to flay him." This is the complete height of absurdity. The hard-shell Baptists could go no further.

The circle into which Hawthorne was flung while in Rome was, in the main, an artistic one. Important among these Roman friends was William Wetmore Story, the sculptor and intimate friend of Robert Browning, whose statue of Cleopatra plays a minor part in "The Marble Faun." Passing from studio to studio and observing his acquaintances at work Hawthorne picked up a lot of the jargon of professional artists. He appears to have been a little sunnier in disposition now, more willing to mingle with people at gatherings, and rather satisfied with Rome. It is true that he knew no Italians and that he made no noticeable attempts to probe

the intricacies of the Italian mind. Contemporary Rome, dirty, colorful, sinful, martial, boiled about him, but he always thought of the capital as a city of the past. For him it was a huge Salle Carrée lined with the broken monuments of vanished eras. In spite of his acquaintances and his own sensitivity he remained a tourist to the last, a provincial who had strayed far from his proper environment, and it was in this spirit that he trudged through the streets of Rome. He does not appear to have been concerned at all with the political phenomena of the day although he mentioned several times the red-trousered French soldiers who roystered through the byways. He was, in effect, Uncle Jonathan abroad, and yet he lacked the vulgarity of that type. He was too sensitive, too reserved, too much the master of his own feelings, to be the average American abroad. But he was an American and a New Englander and it was with the inborn reactions of such a type that he faced the free amoral life of Rome.

The typical American brings his own country with him wherever he goes, and, to a certain extent, this is what Hawthorne did, although he never attempted to impose his country on the scene about him. Hawthorne knew that he was an American (or rather a New Englander; his patriotism really extended no further than that corner of the Republic) but he also knew that he was in a world wherein he could take no part and which cared very little about him. It was a little wistfully, therefore, that he observed this old world that was so strange and new to him. He knew that he could never be

a part of it, that he could never take it in in all its complexity and shifting values. He did not try, then, to understand the contemporary scene, its art, its letters, its language, its personality, but satisfied himself with the world which he created for himself out of old ruins, objective contacts, and the conversations of acquaintances. His note-books became crammed with descriptions of churches, palaces, picture galleries, streets, people, and chance words. The zest of an alien people induced a renascence of the creative urge within him and he found materials to his hand in the Roman scene. The idea of a romance (and for a long time he had felt guilty because of his abysmal silence) plucked at the back of his mind. The idea evolved slowly as he plodded about the streets of Rome gaping at faded pictures in musty churches and the blank walls of old palaces. He had never before written about anything but New England and the type of mind that he understood so clearly, and he had always been in the midst of New England when he had written about it. What should he do now in barbarous Rome where everybody talked about art and the masked people raced through the streets flinging flowers (and sometimes lime) at one another during the pagan Carnival and married ladies drove forth in the Corso with their cecisbeos on one side and their husbands on the other and dirty monks strode through the unswept thoroughfares and church bells rang day and night and leering fauns peeped out of museum galleries? His long rest from creative writing had refreshened his brain and

the reservoir from which he had drawn "The Scarlet Letter," "The House of the Seven Gables" and "The Blithedale Romance" was filling up again. It was filling up with new and jangled things. Although he could not be a part of the Roman scene neither could he wholly escape it. He conceived his idea for a romance, therefore, that should circumscribe all that he had seen in his three months of wandering over the surface of Rome.

III

It was with this nebulous scheme of a romance boiling in his mind that Hawthorne, together with his wife and children, departed in May, 1858, from Rome to seek a cooler summer in the more northern city of Florence. During the months of June and July he lived very near the Robert Brownings, who were installed in their famous Casa Guidi. Near him, also, was Hiram Powers, the American sculptor whose Greek Slave had been so admired by an American public hungry for culture and art provided they were not too esoteric. Powers was not too esoteric and he filled the bill. Behind the thin mask of his artistic instinct loomed a "handy Yankee" full of "smart" mechanical ideas. He could turn out marble buttons from an iron apparatus he had invented as easily as he could turn out a marble Venus. A confirmed egotist crammed with dogmatic convictions, he interested Hawthorne, who listened to him calmly enough but nearly always spiced Powers' ululations with the proverbial grains

of salt. Another cross Hawthorne had to bear was the spiritualistic inclinations of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, that frail poetess who was to pass away within so few years from this time. Sophia lent herself all too readily to these manifestations. There was to be much more of this when the Hawthornes moved to the Villa Montaüto on the hill of Bellosguardo about a mile from Florence, in August. Before this removal, however, Hawthorne had done his duty by Florence in the tourist sense of the word, tramping all over it and setting down the usual notations. There was the Duomo to see, the Baptistery, the Palazzo Vecchio, the Cathedral, the Uffizzi Gallery, and the Pitti Palace. He did not see the ghost of Savonarola. And there was the Venus di Medici. Hawthorne was plainly moved by this famous statue. "I felt a kind of tenderness for her," he noted, "an affection not as if she were one woman, but all womanhood in one." Averting his eyes from Titian's Venus, "reclining on a couch, naked and lustful," he concluded his day's observations with: "The Venus di Medici has a dimple in her chin."

Although Florence was extremely hot during these months and the children strove to cool off by devouring numberless cherries and apricots—their youthful appetites not being up to figs—Hawthorne seems to have thoroughly enjoyed himself. He was arriving at the point where he could look a picture in the eye without wincing even if it were lightly clad, and notes for the new novel were dripping from the nub of his quill. Life was leisurely in

Florence, a warm, luxurious existence untinged by the helter-skelter of Rome. It was possible to think, to meditate, to walk slowly, to let one's dreams crystallize. The newness of his environment had worn off somewhat and Hawthorne, although he was still pretty much the curious tourist, did not feel that it was so absolutely necessary to trudge about constantly seeking nascent aspects of Italian life. The Feast of St. John came along and he had the dubious pleasure of again observing natives in carnival spirits although this time, unlike the Romans, they went without masks and confetti. He saw the Grand Duke during this festival and, according to Sophia, that unfortunate nobleman "looked like a monkey with an evil disposition." It was all a period of blissful poking about, frquent conversations—especially with the domineering Hiram Powers, and intellectual adjustment toward the new work shaping itself so rapidly in Hawthorne's mind. He sat before his bottles of pale golden wine and smiled frequently.

But the heat continued without abatement. The stuccoed walls of the city and the flat pavements caught the burning flood and flung it against the faces of the pedestrians. The young ostler across the way stripped himself to the waist and lounged in the street, his torso gleaming like a marble from the Uffizzi. Hawthorne, although he loved the tropic heat on his body, realized that it was time to get away to the country, to find some hill where the wind blew, and, at the same time, to find a haven for writing the first sketch of "The Marble Faun,"

which now had formulated itself sufficiently in his mind. Presently a delicately-built anaemic young man whose every vein bespoke unadulterated blue blood called at the Casa della Bella and conversed with Hawthorne on weighty matters. He was the Count of Montaüto, an impoverished scion of an old Florentine family, and the result of his conversation with Hawthorne occasioned the renting of the Villa Montaüto at Bellosguardo. It was with some enthusiasm that the Hawthorne family removed in August from the stifling city to the villa on the hill. Young Julian danced and shouted before the iron gates. For forty scudi a month Hawthorne had hired a castle with forty rooms, a *podere* of grapes and figs extending to a dozen acres, and an historic tower that was haunted. What more could any novelist desire as a scene for a new romance?

Here the family settled until October and here the first draft of "The Marble Faun" was written. The location was ideal. Each member of the family had three or four rooms to himself or herself and there were at least twenty chambers left for communal occupation. After sunset the comet of Donati streamed across the sky and remained, a blazing phenomenon, until near morning. From the haunted tower the owls floated forth on ghostly wings after dark, their mournful hooting sounding eerily from the battlements. The tables were piled high with bursting figs and purple grapes. In the evening the family mounted to the top of the tower and reposed in darkness gazing off across the valley of the Arno to the distant hills where the raging

Italian thunder-storms made a mystery in the night. Above them the great starry wheel revolved. Hawthorne had come a long way for this. He had crossed the parching desert of repression and fought his way through the swamp of despond. He had walked dubiously in a twilight of oblivion and he had sat, a stranger, among the tobacco-chewers of the Republic and waited with an uncommon patience for what time might bring forth. It was a great journey for a taciturn and solitary New Englander.

There was but little to hold Hawthorne from his self-imposed task. In a neighboring villa dwelt the Brownings, and Sophia, entirely bitten by the spiritualistic idea, may have introduced an alien element into the daily life of the novelist. Then, too, Florence was but fifteen minutes away and there were frequent trips to the city. On the whole, however, it was an exceedingly quiet period, a lull, so to speak, in the months of dashing hither and thither. A few visitors came, but not many. Hawthorne again had his life to himself. It is possible that he saw signs and portents in Donati's comet, prophecies "importing changes of times and states," and it is also possible that he felt the old sadness of Italy, that sadness that comes from observation of quiet countrysides in the sunset, of an ancient life founded upon a still more ancient way of living. But, on the whole, for him, he was contented. It was from the Villa Montaüto that he wrote to a friend: "It is pleasant to feel at last that I am really away from America—a satisfaction that I

never really enjoyed as long as I stayed in Liverpool, where it seemed to be that the quintessence of nasal and hand-shaking Yankeedom was gradually filtered and sublimated through my consulate, on the way outward and homeward. I first got acquainted with my own countrymen there. At Rome, too, it was not much better. But here in Florence, and in the summertime, and in this secluded villa, I have escaped out of all my old tracks, and am really remote." It was remoteness, really, that he sought, remoteness from the small peccadilloes and actualities of a practical living, remoteness from a false and superficial social scene, remoteness from problems and dogmas and duties and obligations. On the quiet hill-slope of Bellosguardo he found it. If he could have stayed there for five or six years the entire history of his after-life might have been changed. He could not do this, however. His children were in that formative state that was to shape them for all time and he wanted them to be Americans, perhaps better Americans than he had been. It was necessary to turn his eyes backward to that bleak northern terrain which had been his own sustenance during his early years. In the meantime, however, he could apply himself with a high degree of diligence to his new romance.

"The Marble Faun," upon which he labored a few hours each day, had received its original inception in April, 1858, when Hawthorne had visited the sculpture gallery in the Capitol at Rome. "We went afterwards into the sculpture gallery," he noted in his journal, "where I looked at the Faun

of Praxiteles, and was sensible of a peculiar charm in it; a sylvan beauty and homeliness, friendly and and wild at once. The lengthened but not preposterous ears, and the little tail which we infer, have an exquisite effect, and make the spectator smile in his very heart. This race of fauns was the most delightful of all that antiquity imagined. It seems to me that a story, with all sorts of fun and pathos in it, might be contrived on the idea of their species having become intermingled with the human race; a family with the faun blood in them having prolonged itself from the classic era till our own days. The tail might have disappeared, by dint of constant intermarriage with ordinary mortals; but the pretty hairy ears should occasionally reappear in members of the family; and the moral instincts and intellectual characteristics of the faun might be most picturesquely brought out, without detriment to the human interest of the story. Fancy his combination in the person of a young lady!" However, Hawthorne, brooding over the idea, did not "fancy" this combination so far as a young lady was concerned. Various elements entered into the theme as he mulled it over in his mind, a handsome young Jewess whom he had seen at a dinner in England, the aristocratic young Count of Montaüto who had rented the villa to him, the villa itself with its haunted tower, the scores of descriptive passages of Rome he had set down in his note-books, a tower in the Via Portoghese with an everlasting light burning before the Virgin's shrine, the blessed consolation of the Roman Catholic confessional, the

artistic jargon he had picked up in the studios, the pictures and sculptures he had seen, the tragic story of Beatrice Cenci, a dead monk from whose nostrils streamed blood in the church of the Capuchins, a buffalo-calf grazing in the Via Latina, the Carnival with its masks and mummeries. All of these things floated about in his consciousness and gradually they began to assume a coherent ensemble.

The theme about which these colored particles of a Latin world floated and then adhered was not to be a mere tale with "all sorts of fun and pathos in it." Hawthorne's ancient Puritan obsession came to the front and shaped his material for him and "The Marble Faun" became another study in sin and conscience. The idea of a happy innocent creature without a human soul committing a crime and then through self-torture evolving a soul with all the divine obligations of spiritual essence eventually became the basis of his novel. Whether or not the first draft—which may have been no more than a full sketch or synopsis—contained all the implications included in the later version written in England is unknown, but Hawthorne must have had his main theme well in mind while he sat in the pleasant Villa Montaüto and scribbled away at his new creation.

He had done no creative work for six years and it must have been with some degree of gusto that he sat down to his task. It was with this labor that he passed the hot summer months on his hill-slope of Bellosguardo. No more acute betrayal of his congenital New Englandism was possible than this

spectacle of an aesthetic personality fresh from the turmoil of Rome and soothed by the quietude of the hills about Florence bending all of his intellectual and imaginative powers toward the solution of a stark moral problem. The essential man had not been changed by a changed life. His surface values may have taken on new colors but the impenetrable twilight of the soul that cut him off so sharply from other men and translated him into a sort of veiled mystery was too much the man himself to endure any changes. Emptied of that cloudy content he would have been a hollow figure. He sat, therefore, as he had sat in the haunted chamber under the eaves in Salem or in the mossy seclusion of the Old Manse and created his characters for a specific function, a problem of the soul that had nothing to do with the Italian scene. And when his problem was solved his characters would blow out on thin air as all his others had vanished.

October came and with it came colder winds from the Apennines. Hawthorne knew that it was time to leave his pleasant villa and journey southward, He packed his manuscripts and note-books away, therefore, and, together with Sophia, Julian, Una, and Rose, moved leisurely toward Rome, pausing for ten days at Siena, where William Wetmore Story acted as host. Once in Rome the family settled in an apartment on the Piazza Poli and Hawthorne decided to remain there for six months and finish his book. However, Fate intervened and although Hawthorne remained in Rome for the winter he did little work. His daughter, Una, while out sketch-

ing in the Palace of the Caesars with her governess, Ada Shepard, contracted Roman fever and for four months her life hung in the balance. This was a time of dark and repressed suffering for Hawthorne, and, coming so close upon the idyllic days at Villa Montaüto, it must have impressed upon the sensitive-natured man again the fatalistic vagaries of uncertain life. He was a man who concealed the wounds of fortune as much as possible and this very repression undoubtedly intensified the anguish he endured in crises such as this of his daughter's illness. Never of a sanguine temperament he was prone to accept the dark side of things and to adjust himself almost automatically to the worst that fortune might have to offer. It was the attitude of the confirmed addict to solitude, of the man who cannot relieve himself through outward gestures and a spontaneous flood of sorrow. Such a man is dammed up inside; his tears will not flow, there are no words for him to speak. He hugs his grief to his secret bosom and makes no attempt to rise above it, to stun it with the triumphant sanguinity of religious expectation. Hawthorne was no Doctor Pangloss. He was a man who instinctively made up his mind to face the imminent possibility of his daughter's death in an alien land rather than waver wretchedly between hope and fear.

He moved in a pocket of darkness during these days. The unfinished book was laid away and forgotten for the time being, and as the dark and doleful winter spread its desolate grayness over Rome, Hawthorne wandered through his days like

a lost man in a trance. At first there were cards in the evening, games at which the children laughed and chattered while Hawthorne strove valiantly to summon up a smile from the depths of that nature which was but on a bowing acquaintance with laughter. One day the doctor, Franco, came from the sick-room and spoke seriously and privately with Hawthorne and his wife, and the children sensed from the immediate chill in the air that the hopes were against Una's recovery. That evening they sat down to cards as usual. The game was whist and it was started in a dead silence. One hand was played. Hawthorne laid down his cards. "We won't play any more," he said. He had reached the limit of his endurance, and, like a lonely and wounded animal, could stand casual contacts no longer.

The winter crept on leaden feet and Hawthorne dumbly awaited the worst. Then came the crisis of the illness and Una, after hours of doubt, turned the corner safely toward life and a wan liveliness permeated the household. A long and tedious convalescence ensued, a convalescence that proceeded without untoward relapses and Hawthorne, with a mighty weight lifted from his nature, stepped once more into life, stepped tentatively and shyly as usual. Horatio Bridge came to Rome and there were pleasant moments between the old friends. Then, too, shortly after this, Franklin Pierce arrived in the Holy City and Hawthorne had an opportunity to test his regard for the man who had been President of the Republic and his intimate as

well. He found him as faithful and responsive as ever to the old relationship. "I do not love him one whit the less for having been President," noted Hawthorne, following a curious line of reasoning, "nor for having done me the greatest good in his power; a fact that speaks eloquently in his favor, and perhaps says a little for myself. If he had been merely a benefactor, perhaps I might not have borne it so well; but each did his best for the other as friend for friend." An independent man sensitive to the nuances of relationships is speaking here.

With early spring came the Carnival and Hawthorne, now that Una could take a feeble part in the festivities, entered more fully into the spirit of the *festa* than he had done the year before. He rode in a carriage up and down the Corso and flung flowers and confetti at the shouting and boisterous masked figures. Each flower that he flung, each handful of colored shreds of paper was one of the winter's cares tossed into the masked face of destiny. While he was in the act of playfulness he could realize the zest of this carefree abandonment but the moment that he leaned back in his carriage and became the brooding observer he saw the absurdity of it all. He was not shaped for these games and he knew it. He was a gray-haired New Englander of fifty-five years and the chill east-wind of Salem was in his bones. There was no Merry Mount where he might dance about a pagan May-pole.

He now began to bethink himself about a return to America. There were his children to think of,

two daughters to educate and a son to be sent to Cambridge. He did not want them to be denationalized and he realized that they were passing through formative periods that would shape them mentally and morally for all time. New England, therefore, beckoned in the distance. In May the family set out traveling via Marseilles, Avignon, Geneva, and Paris to London. His immediate purpose was to set sail for America, but these plans were disrupted for various causes, the more important being financial, and Hawthorne decided to remain for another year in England, to finish his romance and have it published there, and then to return to The Wayside, Concord. His Italian days were over but the memory of them was fresh in his mind and he was to make the most of them in his new romance. The color and magic, none of which had been very close to his heart, were dissipated in the gray weather of London and it is possible that he began to feel a little more at home as he wandered for a few weeks through the narrow streets of the English capital and then retired to the country, first to Whitby and then to Redcar, and concentrated upon his last novel.

IV

At Redcar Hawthorne wrote every morning until the dinner-hour, which was at half-past one, and after the meal he would take his son walking with him along the sands facing the German ocean. It was a solitary place, just the sort of cul-de-sac from

activity that best suited Hawthorne when he was at work on any extended composition, and a certain picturesque quality enhanced the lonely features of the little community. The drizzling rain came down frequently and obscured the dark mass of the town. Then there was the dull red sunset sky to furnish a background for Redcar. It was quiet, deserted, almost desolate, the typical tiny resort "out of season." There were days of the dull progression of labor and there were no interruptions. By October, however, the weather became too chilly and boisterous and the Hawthornes removed to Leamington. On November 8, 1859, Hawthorne completed "The Marble Faun" but he stayed on at Leamington until March of 1860. "The Marble Faun" was immediately sent to Smith, Elder and Company, and late in February, 1860, was issued under title of "Transformation." Some weeks later the book was published in America bearing Hawthorne's chosen title, "The Marble Faun: A Romance of Monte Beni." In the meantime Hawthorne and his family went to Bath for a vacation and from there to London, where he was entertained as much as he would permit himself to be entertained by such personages as Lord Dufferin and Richard Monckton Milnes. During this period he began to receive many adverse notices of "The Marble Faun," (it is as well to call this book by its commonly-known title instead of "Transformation"), the English press deprecating what it regarded as an inconclusive ending. Hawthorne, always inclined to have but small faith in himself,

went about muttering, "It is a failure." As a matter of fact "The Marble Faun" is both a failure and a success.

It is impossible to escape the conviction that two Hawthornes, the old one and a new one, are struggling in the pages of "The Marble Faun." The old Hawthorne wins, as we should expect him to do in a man so "set" in nature and matured to an iron point of view, wins handsomely but at some expense to the unity of his art. The new Hawthorne, perhaps no more than a shadowy figure, strove indecisively to employ the European scene and European characteristics for the purposes of a theme that only the old Hawthorne could properly outline and mold to a coherent purpose. The commingling of the two Hawthornes was so unequal that it might be symbolized in a man striding along accompanied by a thin shadow. The shadow falls on Italy but the man walks through New England. Heretofore Hawthorne had been faithful to the locale of his nativity. "The Scarlet Letter" was a shadow of his own spiritual past. Both "The House of the Seven Gables" and "The Blithedale Romance" were the direct result of an observation of and a brooding over the New England scene as he knew it and as he could detach himself from it. But in "The Marble Faun" he strove to circumscribe a foreign scene, to animate that scene with urges kindred to it. In so far as he strove to do this he failed lamentably. There is nothing of Europe in "The Marble Faun." Donatello may be a faun but he is not the faun of Praxiteles. He

is rather a quaint New England faun who would be more at home peering out through the thin trunks of white birch trees, and, when a soul is vouchsafed him, he attains it through suffering, and the soul is colored with the moralistic passions of Puritan conceptions. As for Miriam, she, again, is an attempt to create that strong, dark type of rebellious woman first put forward in Hester Prynne and then modernized to a certain extent in Zenobia. These women have been sophisticated by sin and it is never the sin in itself that holds Hawthorne's interest. He is intent only on the spiritual results of that sin. We know Hester's sin but only through the necessity of Hawthorne's situation. In the cases of Zenobia and Miriam their sins are cloudy indications and it is exceedingly doubtful that Hawthorne himself knew what they had done.

This superb indifference on Hawthorne's part to either the past or the future of his principal characters is an outstanding aspect of his intellectual and emotional attack in his books. It is brought out most clearly in "The Marble Faun." Hawthorne's absorption in the quartet of starkly differentiated personages who play out the drama is intensive only while the puppets are in actual play. Donatello's youth is frozen into the marble of Praxiteles and his future is whatever the reader desires to make of it. Miriam's past is a matter of semi-tragic hints flung out carelessly. What her crime was, what the influence of the sinister monk (who stepped out of Gothic romance to serve Hawthorne's purpose) on her, are secrets and, though

the novelist, perhaps, had a vague identification of her with Beatrice Cenci, we may be sure that he did not know what crime she had committed. After all, such knowledge was hardly necessary for Hawthorne's purpose and though various friends rebelled at his mistiness he confined himself steadfastly to the purpose he had in hand. He was artist enough not to dissipate the unity of his central theme, although he was not artist enough, except in "The Scarlet Letter," to maintain that unity in his actual arrangement of incidents. "The Marble Faun" is a loosely written book in which the action is frequently clogged. It lapses, gathers itself together again with an effort, rises to a sure peak, and then drops weakly. This is repeated time and again. But though this is so Hawthorne never releases his characters from their contemporaneity. They are isolated specimens under the strong microscope of Hawthorne's mind and from whence they came or whither they go is a matter of indifference to the gentle scientist of souls. They are caught in a state of being and it is that state of being with its consequent reactions to life which absorbs the curiosity of the novelist.

Donatello's love for Miriam, his committal of a crime for her sake, the ravages of the crime on his gentle faun-like nature, and his spiritual birth and regeneration through that crime, are the threads which are woven into the central theme of the story. Subsidiary to this is the study of Hilda's soul, her purity and the dark blot of guilty knowledge of Donatello's and Miriam's crime which destroys her

peace and faith, and the eventual release from that bondage through the Roman Catholic confessional. Barely indicated under all this is Kenyon's love for Hilda. He, after all, is little more than an interested observer, a Miles Coverdale, Hawthorne himself. The situation so conceived is worked out with a minimum of characters (always a marked feature of Hawthorne's selective and thrifty mind) although the whole of Rome is set off as a background for the action. This theme is the theme of a New Englander and it is alien to the blood-currents of the Italian scene. It is as un-European in its development and dénouement as "Rappaccini's Daughter." The moral values involved all sprang from the soil of New England and the scene might very well have been laid in Boston. Yet the elaborate decoration of the theme reveals certain European influences, influences that Hawthorne never would have revealed if it had not been for his years abroad. Especially is this so in those portions of the book concerned with art and aesthetic questions. Hawthorne displayed here a sluggishly eager desire to enlarge his own artistic perspective and there is even an occasional hint of a far-away comprehension of the philosophical implications of art in life. It is but a thin light on the horizon but it is sufficient to awaken the thought that if Hawthorne had ventured on Europe sooner (at the age and with the opportunities of Longfellow, say) he might have been an important link between an awakened aesthetic consciousness and the naturalistic ardor of the New England mind. Greater, perhaps, than

this vaguely aspiring interest in art (the interest of a rather old man who realizes deep inside of himself that he can hardly go very far) is the surprising revelation of Hawthorne's instinctive reaction to the Roman Catholic Church. When he takes his pretty little New England heretic into the confessional-box and brings her forth still a heretic but cleansed in spirit, newly washed, as it were, in the sparkling bath of innocence, he shows how amazingly far he has traveled from Gallows Hill, Salem. This incident, together with Hester Prynne's unexpected avowal of her faith in the consecration of her sin with Dimmesdale, forms a brief but flaring revelation of the potential aesthetic proclivities of the man, proclivities that break away cleanly from a drab but intense New England heritage.

Of the Roman scene itself as interpreted in "The Marble Faun" little more may be said than that it sometimes heightens the reader's interest and nearly always weakens the technical structure. Hawthorne's Rome was the Rome of the guide-books and he was almost ridiculously zealous in putting down everything that he saw. Galleries, churches, and streets are dragged in and interest in them is sustained only through that mellow light which the novelist throws across his paragraphs. Though the various facets of Roman life are drawn with clarity and dexterity it is obvious always that these facets are observed from a unique and falsifying angle. This is not Rome as it was but Rome as one man saw it. It is Rome seen through the vaguely sad eyes of a New Englander. The sun shines brightly

enough, the maskers fling their confetti with abandonment at Carnival time, and a certain actuality is made manifest; still, all this is seen through a faint mist, a mist that rose from the Salem marshes. Perhaps the very anguish of his quartet of figures adds something to this doleful aspect of the Holy City, this retracing of an old pattern with a quill dipped in the lonely essence of New England parochialism. None of the four personages, not even Donatello, belong to the Roman scene. They are aliens wandering through a huge barbaric stage, lost people not even striving to orientate themselves to an existence that is supposedly a very part of their physical or mental being. They do not fit in as do the characters in "The Scarlet Letter," "The House of the Seven Gables," and "The Blithedale Romance." In those earlier books the environment was a part of the characters, a portion of their being, but in "The Marble Faun" Rome is never anything but a purely arbitrary stage for Miriam, Hilda, Donatello, and Kenyon. They walk through it but their thoughts and minds (except in the solitary case of Hilda and the confessional) are not touched by it. Their griefs are their own and their attitude toward those griefs is wholly untouched by the faint pagan memorials hovering in the air about them.

These four people who occupy the scene in "The Marble Faun" are curious creations in so far as the reality of characterization goes. Not one of them is real in a four-square meaning of the word. Miriam is romance incarnate, romance dwelt upon

by an essentially repressed nature. Hilda is another type of that New England maiden, pure and trusting, made familiar to his readers by Hawthorne in the Phoebe of "The House of the Seven Gables" and the Priscilla of "The Blithedale Romance." She is drawn to greater purpose than either of her previous sisters but she is still a type. It would be unjust (as has been intimated before) to assert that Hilda, Phoebe, and Priscilla were all cut from the same piece of cloth, for there is an obvious differentiation between them. But the differentiation is purely to fit them to the exigencies of the particular theme which Hawthorne had in mind. Indeed, this is true of all of Hawthorne's characters except those smaller subsidiary vignettes such as Uncle Venner or Old Moody which were the result of observation retouched to magic by imagination. He was concerned mainly with the implications of his theme and he cast about to find certain puppets to properly exploit it. He was concerned with these figures only while they were serving his specific purpose. Viewed from this angle it is obvious that Hawthorne was not a realist at all. But, at the same time, his inveterate observation of the human animal wrought an inclination for naturalism in him, and, therefore, these personages created on so unreal a basis were developed with some degree of reality.

With "The Marble Faun" Hawthorne concluded his sustained labors as a creative artist. He was fifty-six years old, tired in mind and spirit, although he was not fully conscious of this weariness, and

his powers of creation and concentration were grievously diminished. He had what might be called four major works to represent him to the world and it is to be suspected that he was not particularly complacent about any of them. Yet those works served to place him definitely and for all time in the proud-minded hierarchy of New England writers. His attitude had been one of isolation from the very first, and, because of this, his work revealed an essential uniqueness that was not duplicated by any of his contemporaries. He had explored the consequences of sin, ignoring the causes, and in doing this he had expressed better the essential New England spirit than any of the more placid moralists who surrounded him. He knew that conscience was a hidden and terrible thing, and he made of conscience a protagonist that was without parallel in the history of the letters of the Republic. And he clothed his creations in an atmosphere that was peculiarly his own, an atmosphere partially induced by an agreeable and unforced prose and partially colored by the mist-like sadness of a solitary and introspective nature. He was an Ethan Brand of the soul searching not for the Unforgivable Sin but for the immitigable consequences of sin. He was never to destroy himself as Ethan Brand did, for the fires that moved him were subterranean fires and the deeper portion of his knowledge was subconscious and not as plain to him as it is to us to-day. There were moments when he moved through the world of the intellect as a man in a lethargy and we must believe that

he was never quite conscious of the depth of the springs from which he drank so fastidiously. We must believe also that he never—even unconsciously—achieved the eventual depth of those springs and that if his environment had vouchsafed a fairer and more compelling surface he might have placed "The Scarlet Letter" as a point from which to advance. As it was, "The Scarlet Letter" became the high point of his achievement. He did nothing better in intensive and unified creation although he touched more naturalistic moments in "The House of the Seven Gables."

"The Marble Faun," as excellent as it is (and it must be remembered that one or two of Hawthorne's finest moments are in this romance), belongs on a lower level than either "The Scarlet Letter" or "The House of the Seven Gables." He strove most plainly for a greater work, for his greatest work of all, but the two Hawthornes that became entangled in the pages of the Italian novel nullified his ambitious effort. He had reached that point of time where he could no longer leap very far beyond himself. The shadowy Hawthorne, born from an unceasing observation of the Roman scene with all its multicolored surfaces, was too weak a creature to do more than indicate certain inclinations. The real Hawthorne, the taciturn and solitary New Englander with his sharp eye turned against time and the yeast of a semi-dissipated Puritanism fermenting within him, was still strong enough to dominate his material. But it was the strength of a forced exertion. It depleted whatever

residue remained in the man, and, though he was now to go back to New England, he was no Antaeus. Though his feet were to tread familiar lanes and though he was to hear old voices and experience the atmosphere that had shaped him from maturity he could not regain new strength. He was a tired man and the world was changing, after all. There was war and rumors of war in the air. The prophecy of Donati's comet, that blazing crystalline phenomenon that had flared above the quiet hill-slope at Bellosguardo, was about to come to pass. When in June, 1860, Hawthorne, accompanied by his family, set forth from Liverpool for Boston, he must have suspected that his work in this world was practically ended. The year 1860 was to draw a sharp line between two periods of the mind and Hawthorne assuredly did not belong on the hither side of it. He belonged, body and soul, to the old New England and he was not a man who adjusted himself to new conditions easily.

CHAPTER FOUR

I

THROUGH a countryside shriveled by heat and dotted with dusty herbage the Hawthornes drove in the station wagon to The Wayside, Concord. Around them they saw the familiar white clapboard houses, the small churches perching like roosters on their miniature eminences, the meandering stone walls, the color and scent and feel of the New England summer. After seven years of willing exile Hawthorne had unwillingly returned to the land of his birth. His heart was not in this return although an inborn pragmatism convinced him that only in return could he still remain himself. He was, after all, a man of duties and obligations although an aesthetic daemon dominated him at times and suggested an escape from this weighty heritage. He did not possess the virility for a complete escape and it was only in a series of tentative gestures, half-expressed desires, and instinctive manifestations that he could express his vague dissatisfaction with the lot apportioned him by the genius of his being. He looked back at Europe not with a nostalgia but with a cold regret. He was too old to actually reveal a passionate dissaffection for the familiar scene but there is no doubt that the comparison of this meager rural existence with

the more buoyant and colored spectacle of Rome aroused a perceptible unrest in him. At the same time there was an unmistakable relief in reaching home, in settling back into an old familiar groove, of being himself in a corner of the world that knew him and did not expect him to be anything but himself. He could outreach his solitary instincts only by an effort of the will and this effort occasioned an uneasiness in him that disturbed his peculiar equilibrium. There was no need for efforts of this sort in Concord, where he was amongst old acquaintances, a riper Emerson, a calmer Thoreau, a less volatile Channing. Time had moved along with all of them but except for this they were essentially the same. Hawthorne himself had known none of them so well that he would have to adjust the broken threads of communication. He had but to slip back into his old scene and remount his horse of the night.

It was a feverish atmosphere into which he inducted his growing children. Julian was packed off to Mr. Frank Sanborn's school and Mr. Sanborn was a gentleman of stout abolitionist tendencies who had been involved with John Brown. Indeed, there were abolitionists all around Hawthorne. There was talk of war and threats of war, expostulations, fiery denunciations, schemes for freeing the negroes, plans and counterplans, loud and constant argumentation. Hawthorne listened to as much of it as came his way with a sort of unconcerned boredom. During this first summer of his return to Concord he did not mix intimately with his friends but re-

mained in the rural solitude of The Wayside primarily concerned with certain additions to the old house. Carpenters came and there was a screaming of saws and a whistling of planes. A tower was reared over the building that had once belonged to the peripatetic philosopher and in it Hawthorne arranged his study. Why did he want a tower after all these years? Did he think that he could raise himself somewhat from the New England scene, that from such a vantage-point he could gaze down on the dusty lanes along which the cows moved and Mr. Emerson strolled? Was there a subtle satisfaction in lifting himself even this tiny bit above the soil that had taken the bones of his dark preceding generations? The real reason, it is to be suspected, was a sharp and almost nostalgic memory of the haunted tower on the hill-slope at Bellosguardo, the tower of the Villa Montaüto where he had passed so carefree and comfortable a summer. His Concord tower could not overlook the Valley of the Arno and there were no sun-smitten Apennines to gleam in the distance. Neither was the fiery wonder of Donati's comet to flare above him during the long summer evenings. But there would be a suggestion of height and removal from the world, a place where he could sit like a wise old sage and stare down at Time, a refuge from voices and doorbells and visitors. The tower was a substitution for that haunted chamber under the eaves on Herbert Street in Salem. At the end he desired to return to the loneliness and remoteness of his youth.

He could not escape from the imminent war in this tower. No tower would be high enough for that. The autumn and winter crept along and Hawthorne strove vainly to hide himself from the uneasy bruit of the day. It beat about him, however, and increased that lassitude of being which had permeated his tired frame. He discovered that it was an effort to write, that his powers of concentration were grievously impaired. Still he stuck to his task and passed his mornings in the tower striving to arrange the inchoate romance that kept mercilessly tapping at his intelligence. He was trying to tie together into a single theme two subjects which had haunted him for a long time, that of the elixir of life and that of the Bloody Footprint which he had seen in Smithell's Hall in England. His powers of coördination, however, were weakened and he made small headway with the proposed task. In the meantime the secession movement developed, the Union was split apart by gigantic agitation and in the spring of 1861 the first guns roared. Hawthorne could not but take in all this. He had never been a nationalist in the true sense of the word. To him patriotism had meant sectionalism. He was a New Englander first of all and an American after that. His reactions to slavery were slight. There was not a particle of sentimentality in his being and it was impossible for him to enter into the fiery demonstrations of the Massachusetts abolitionists. If there was to be a war it merely simmered down to a choice between two evils and it is possible that in the back of his mind he rather approved the

idea of a little republic to be fashioned out of the New England States. The Union, as such, did not mean much to him and this attitude set him apart from his many familiars in the New England scene. They could not understand his coldness in the face of passion, his abstinence from the embroiled factions of the day. It must be remembered that he had never been in the thick of the argumentation that had so aroused the country. He had been in Europe dreaming of art during those feverish seven years of preparation for a cataclysm that was to split apart half the world. Even if he had never been abroad, however, it is doubtful that Hawthorne would have entered strenuously into the quarrels of the time. He was a born reactionary, a statement that has been made before, and he was less concerned with the fluctuations of the world about him than he was with the tinier ripples in his own mind.

This peculiar blindness to circumstances is nothing unusual in a solitary man. When Hawthorne's youth had been formulated in Salem he had been forced into a lonely existence which took no cognizance of the small phenomena of his native town. He was the constant observer, standing apart from life and its multifarious manifestations and seeing them as matters of shifting surfaces. He was to be the same in his attitude toward the phenomena of the greater world that comprehended the United States. While Hawthorne was not exactly like a turtle drawing his head into his shell at the slightest approach of unusual circum-

stances he was pretty near that type of creature. Old-fashioned in politics, ignorant of sociological problems, concerned not at all with national economies, he went his quiet way with neither rancor nor unrest. When the blow fell and war was declared and Concord became a hurried martial scene he automatically adopted the viewpoint of the North although there was, perhaps, just as much reason to take a Southern view of things. The truth was that he was not on either side, but that he traveled half-heartedly with his own Commonwealth. The splitting apart of the Union did not seem to him so terrible a thing and we must guess that he possessed no conception of nationalism or any prophetic insight as to the future. His lassitude before the momentous situation in which his country found herself may have been aggravated by his physical condition, which, after all, was that of an old man enfeebled in body and enthusiasms. Life might roar by but he desired a quiet haven after years of gloomy effort. It was of such a haven that he dreamed and if the Union must be ripped apart to provide it for him he could see no reason why this should not happen.

As the summer of 1861 crept along his bodily frame became weaker and his anxious family realized that Hawthorne was approaching a precarious condition. He was old and grey; his flesh had fallen away; his mind did not function with the clarity that had been peculiar to it in bygone years. Now and then he forced a flash of life out of himself, even going so far as to assert that he was glad

war had come as it had aroused a consciousness of his country within him. But he meant by this country his own corner of America and he went on to assert that the Republic had never been one people since the Constitution was formed. As the news of disastrous battles drifted back to Concord he became more and more desolate and alienated from the human contacts about him. In July, 1861, he went to Pride's Crossing for a vacation with his son, Julian, and managed to take some faint pleasure in the change. But he was tired, woefully tired, and the seal of his fate was in his face. His old world was falling to pieces about him and, perhaps, he began to realize that he belonged to a generation which was falling to pieces with that world. It was the quiet, rural New England of previous decades that had given him such nurture as it could and not this excited, war-inflamed terrain where the drums beat and the sons of his acquaintances went forth to do battle with other Americans. What *could* become of the dream of the ghostly house of the seven gables in such a world as this where everything fine and old was falling into a dolorous abyss that might be explored only through the ventures of sad memory? He did not understand it all and he was a trifle bewildered by the rapid shifts of fortune. It was in a seething world that he strove to sit down quietly in his tower and sketch out a romance that had nothing to do with the world as it was, a romance that was uncalled for inasmuch as the audience for it had suffered a sea-change into

something fierce and forbidding and alien to his peculiar temperament.

II

The literary labors of these years were doleful endeavors. Hawthorne simply could not release the romance that he knew was somewhere within him. It was there all right, a definite subject, but it would not come forth. Back in 1858 he had sketched a romance, "The Ancestral Foot-Step," but he had done nothing with it, had laid it aside before his Italian residence, and then "The Marble Faun" had seethed up in his mind and that had occupied him until his return to America. Once installed in Concord, however, and with the added adjunct to solitude—his tower—he had returned to this theme and he made a more or less half-hearted attempt to tie it up with another plan that had occurred to him. The result was an abortive and hastily finished romance entitled "Septimius Felton," which remained unpublished until some years after Hawthorne's death. There is nothing that can be said about this work for it is only representative of Hawthorne in so far as it indicates how far he had fallen from his former clarity. When Hawthorne bought The Wayside he wrote to a friend: "I know nothing of the history of the house, except Thoreau's telling me that it was inhabited a generation or two ago by a man who believed he should never die." It was this man Hawthorne resuscitated as Septimius Felton and it was

The Wayside itself he used as the scene. It was like him to take the thing that was nearest home, the thing that he had observed most clearly, for his book. Hawthorne became dissatisfied with "Septimius Felton" long before he had finished it and the final chapters were flung together hurriedly and in an almost ironical manner. It was put away but the theme was not forgotten. As Hawthorne drew nearer and nearer to death he meditated more and more about the elixir of life and immortality in the flesh.

His uneasy mind turned back again to the "bloody footprint" episode and he determined to make that the dominating motif of the romance and not the theme of immortality. Once more he set to work and the chapters that ensued were published some time after his death under the title of "Dr. Grimshawe's Secret." Here, again, he experienced that humiliating knowledge that the work would not do. Another bundle of manuscript was laid away. These tentative endeavors (and "Dr. Grimshawe's Secret" was not to be the last) testify with a sad eloquence to the state of Hawthorne's mind. He was a lost soul running after a shining light that constantly eluded him. He could no longer recapture the essence of his fancy and mold it to the purpose that his intelligence divined. Tired, for the time being, of the mental struggle he laid his theme away (still troubled by the immortality motif, however, and determined to do something with it) and began to dredge descriptive papers on English towns and scenes from his note-books and

diaries. These articles appeared in The Atlantic Monthly and in 1863 they were published in a single volume by Ticknor and Fields under the title of "Our Old Home." It is revelatory of Hawthorne's peculiar attitude toward the passions of his time to note that he insisted on dedicating this book to his old friend, Franklin Pierce.

Now Pierce, a reactionary and unpopular ex-President, was in high disfavor in the North and Hawthorne's few friends tried to impress upon him the danger of so dedicating a book. It was the very height of the war-time fever and a disgruntled and dogged North, suffering from unexpected vicissitudes and moody with the realization of a long and terrific struggle, was in no state of mind to receive pleasantly a book bearing Franklin Pierce's name upon its forehead. Hawthorne ignored all protests, however. To Fields he wrote: ". . . I find that it would be a piece of poltroonery in me to withdraw either the dedication or the dedicatory letter. . . . I cannot, merely on account of pecuniary profit or literary reputation, go back from what I have deliberately felt and thought it right to do; and if I were to tear out the dedication, I should never look at the volume again without remorse and shame. . . ." "Our Old Home" came out, therefore, with Franklin Pierce's name in the dedication. No clearer picture of the doggedness of Hawthorne's friendship and his courageous conviction may be found in the annals of the novelist's life.

"Our Old Home" was received well enough in this country, although it aroused some antagonism

in England, where a few of the animadversions on the English scene stirred up inflammable tempers. There is little enough to say about these essays. Hawthorne wrote them primarily for the cash they would bring in during their publication in The Atlantic Monthly and while they are done with his usual grace there is nothing unusual or unique about them. They are no better or no worse than the usual type of travel-essay which exhibits the personal reactions of a man to an unfamiliar environment. Hawthorne could not do anything else than have a comparison between the States and England in mind as he wrote, for that was his only standard. He did not enter deeply enough into the English scene to depict or analyze it with any great degree of authority but he did see the surfaces of that world with a peculiar clarity and he made the most of what he saw in his essays.

It was after this brief foray into the field of the essay that he turned back to the romance which still continued to churn in his mind. He could neither get rid of it nor write it and this occasioned a curious sensation of frustration in him which was heightened by his now acute realization of his failing strength. The immortality theme became the dominating influence and dark angel of his last months of creative work and he strove valiantly but weakly to encompass the romance that was obviously too much for him. At the very threshold of the new version of the book which he called "The Dolliver Romance" he was assailed by a strange reluctance. "I linger at the threshold," he stated,

"and have a perception of very disagreeable phantoms to be encountered if I enter." His subconscious self undoubtedly knew that it was too late, that the hour was too far advanced, that the scribbled chapters were but an indefinite gesture to be broken off in thin air. Foolishly enough, Hawthorne agreed to permit the serial publication of "The Dolliver Romance" in The Atlantic Monthly before he had gone very far with the book, but his promise was premature. He lived to finish but three chapters and the function of those chapters was to repose upon his coffin as a symbol of the creative thread snapped short.

He had reached the end of his literary life without knowing it (or with a determination to hide the knowledge from himself and his family) and there was little more he could do than ruminate over the past and bewail the present. Behind The Wayside was a small hill affectionately dubbed the Mount of Vision. There, among the pines and sweetfern, he walked, a halting, emaciated figure, and what he saw in the quiet twilight was his own secret. He saw, perhaps, a smashed world falling in fragments about him, an old world that was sweet and slow-moving and scented with country flowers and peopled with thin ghosts. Out of the débris of this world another world was to arise, a loud shouting, hurried, materialistic world where industry was the chief objective. He was not to be a part of that new world, however. He was to go with the ancient quiet and the gallant South and the village-era of New England. As he strolled along

the path on the Mount of Vision he saw no clouds of fire and a bright angel in them; he saw nothing but a perplexing and shifting scene that would not accept him and which he could not accept. He had run his race in his own way and he had never had close companions in that race. The New England that he knew and loved with the still passionate love of a moody son for a recluse mother was a specter. It had been a specter right along in so far as he was concerned; but he, himself, had partaken of the qualities of a specter. He had lived in the past more valiantly than he had lived in the future. He had shaped his world out of cloudy visions and stealthily moving phantoms. Life was a far-heard echo of sounds to him.

All of this had been the natural heritage of his inborn solitude. In the quiet chamber on Herbert Street, Salem, on the icy surface of Lake Sebago at midnight, in the piney forests about Brunswick, in the hermitage of the Old Manse, in the little red brick house at Lenox, even in the Custom House at Salem and the Consulate at Liverpool and the apartment in Rome and the Villa Montaüto at Bellosguardo, he had walked like a ghost among men, not a part of the vital world about him but an unaffected observer, the Eternal Observer, the man in a trance. He had striven half-heartedly to fight clear of this dusky dominion of solitude and he had lost his fight. He probably rejoiced in the defeat. Only that part of him that possessed an uneasy New England realization of the duties implicit in the practicalities of living, of a utilitarian arrange-

ment of his days, aroused him to indecisive forays into the world of living men.

He could take stock of himself now if he desired and perhaps he did ruminate to some extent upon the laborious road of his career as he strolled backward and forward on the Mount of Vision. It is to be suspected that he did not regard himself as a success. After all, he was not leaving much to his family—a bare subsistence, perhaps, and his faith in his own works was shaken and uncertain. "I have been a happy man, and yet I do not remember any one moment of such happy conspiring circumstances that I could have rung a joy-bell at it." This he wrote to a friend during these last days and the statement may be taken as an epitome of his life. How close in spirit this moody declaration is to Edgar Allan Poe's "The Happiest Day, the Happiest Hour." The best that he had known was a limited peace. Thin, pale, weak, troubled in mind as he was, he yet managed to retain some playfulness of demeanor in the bosom of his immediate family. The days came and went and the newspapers bruited the accounts of bloody battles in the south and New England steadily faded into an aspect that was not at all the New England of "The House of the Seven Gables." Hawthorne laid his quills and his papers away. They had been his stout companions for more than thirty years and now he had no use for them any more. Perhaps as he put them away he begrudged those wasted seasons in the employment of the government that was now

smashing his world to bits. In any case, he was done.

III

Hawthorne's movements during the Civil War were limited. In March, 1862, he went to Washington with William Ticknor and they both obtained a lively impression of the capitol in war-time array. The novelist saw General McClellan, Harper's Ferry, Fortress Monroe, and the battle-field of Manassas. These things brought the war very close to him. Most important of all, he saw Abraham Lincoln and he viewed the war leader in his usual detached fashion. It is to be doubted that he saw any particular genius in the tall, shambling figure who stood before him garmented in a rusty black frock-coat and unbrushed pantaloons. It was not Hawthorne's habit to romanticize people. His eye was too active and too inquiring and his critical sense— so far as individuals were concerned—roved over the surface and did not dip very far beneath it. When he returned from this trip he wrote an article for The Atlantic Monthly, "Chiefly About War Matters," that was so unsympathetic as to arouse the fears of the editors as to its reception by the public. Hawthorne simply could not get into the war. To him it was a monstrosity spawned by an unnecessary ideal for Union. He was absolutely out of the national spirit as it revealed itself in the North and he made no attempts to adjust himself to any patriotic demands. His self-possession and coolness were admirable during a period dominated

by feverish and unthinking urges but these laudable traits were not the result of wisdom. They were the result of a strange disinterestedness. He simply didn't care and that was all there was to it. Not even Abraham Lincoln could make his blood flow a whit the faster.

During this summer of 1862 he went to Goulds-boro, Maine, with his son, Julian, and appears to have had a fairly peaceful and contented time. They went out rowing every day, fished for flounders, swam, cooked chowder on the beach, walked through the pastures and picked berries, and otherwise disported themselves in a gentle way. Hawthorne would sit beneath the shadow of a huge rock and smoke for hours as he gazed off across the quiet landscape to the sea. It was the last peaceful interim he was to know in his life. He was conscious of it and made the most of it. Across this sea, beside which he had been born, lay England and Italy and he undoubtedly thought wistfully about those countries and the seven years he had passed there. In the early autumn he returned to Concord and settled once more into the retired life of the reticent author. During the winter his daughter, Una, fell ill again and Hawthorne was once more harassed and perturbed by sickness in the home. Una recovered, however, but not so Hawthorne, who, upset by this illness, slid more rapidly than ever into his final decline.

During the spring and summer of 1863 he gave indications of no specific ailment but grew thinner, more pallid, and more emaciated day by day. He

stayed in the house most of the time but would occasionally walk forth with a slow and feeble step and stand gazing off across the fields with a world of wistfulness in his eyes. He was looking his last at the New England scene, looking his last now with the acute realization that he would not look much longer, that his abilities had forsaken him, and that he was so constituted that he would not outlast his ability so very long. During the summer he had an aggravated attack of nose-bleeding, it remained with him for twenty-four hours, and this further debilitated the sapped body of the man. In September he made a short visit to Rockport with Una but it did not improve his condition. He faltered on into the winter and his state, for the first time, became rather alarming. Sophia and the children could no longer close their eyes and hope for the best. Sophia wrote: ". . . he is very nervous and delicate; he cannot bear anything, and he must be handled like the airiest Venetian glass. . . ." It was a good image for at the last Hawthorne was very like a piece of "the airiest Venetian glass." He turned his thoughts rather plaintively to England, writing: "If I could but go to England now, I think the sea-voyage and the 'Old Home' might set me all right." It was a forlorn thought and he must have realized it as he wrote it.

In March a decision was made to send him on a brief trip with Pierce and Ticknor, the idea being that the change would invigorate his flagging spirits. It was a mistaken idea and the tragedy that befell the travelers hastened Hawthorne's death.

Pierce discovered at the last minute that he could not accompany the party and Hawthorne set off alone with his faithful friend and publisher, Ticknor. They traveled as far as New York, where they put up at the Astor House for a week. The weather was exceedingly bad, a series of storms raging, and the semi-formulated idea of pushing on as far as Cuba where bright sunlight and warmth might restore Hawthorne was abandoned. In the meantime a cold which Ticknor had contracted grew steadily worse. Still, all his care was for his friend. They went on to Philadelphia, and, during a lull in one of the spring storms, decided to take advantage of the sunlight by riding in Fairmount Park. It grew cold as they rode and Ticknor, removing his overcoat, insisted in wrapping it about Hawthorne. The next day Ticknor felt that his cold was aggravated, the day after that he took to his bed, the third day physicians were summoned and diagnosed the case as one of congestion of the lungs, and on the fourth day Ticknor died, leaving his invalid friend alone in a strange city with a corpse and its countless concomitant details. It was a terrific blow to Hawthorne. He returned home pale and haggard and trembling in every limb, his strength completely sapped and his vitality at a dismally low ebb.

The irony of death had been completely experienced by Hawthorne in this tragedy and he could not remove the horrid lesson from his tired and sensitive mind. Ticknor's face was before him always; those last few days in the bitter spring-storms,

the cruel fact of the stronger taken and the weaker left to bear the burden of desolation, these things blazed themselves on Hawthorne's tired brain. They were an epitome of life to him and he could no longer fight against the depression which they intensified. He went to the funeral (as he had gone a short while before to the funeral of Thoreau) and the look of the grave was marked in his face. Sophia ministered to him tenderly, the children were quiet and attentive, his few friends rallied about him, but he remained in a trance-like state of desolation. He could barely walk now and the spectacle of the man was heart-breaking.

His family knew that he would die immediately unless he were taken from Concord, unless his flagging mind could fasten on new scenes and people. Pierce was called and it was agreed that Hawthorne was to go on an excursion with him through northern New England. After all, that was his native territory and there he might find some few and pathetic reminders of those happier hours that he had known in his solitary youth. Hawthorne acquiesced in the plan but he knew that it was his last journey and one from which he would never return. During these last days before the hour of his departure he was taking, a mute farewell of Sophia and the children, turning back in memory to the white-clad girl who had greeted him for the first time in the Peabody parlor in Salem. It was all so long ago and far away, so gently suffused with the tender romance of ancient things, so wrapped up in his memory as a precious object is wrapped

in lavender-scented tissues and put away in a bureau-drawer.

On the eleventh of May, 1864, Hawthorne traveled to Boston, where he was met by Pierce and they took the evening train to Concord, New Hampshire. The weather was bad and Hawthorne was extremely feeble. Therefore, they rested at Concord, the ex-President administering carefully to his friend, until the following Monday when they resumed travel, stopping at Franklin, Laconia, and Center Harbor, and eventually reaching Plymouth on the 18th at six o'clock in the evening, where they put up at the Pemigewasset House. It was an impossible pilgrimage upon which they were bound and both men must have realized it, a pilgrimage as impossible as the search for the philosopher's stone or the elixir of life. They were seeking life for a man who was already dead.

That night Hawthorne had a little tea and toast in his room (a chamber adjacent to Pierce's quarters) and then slept for an hour upon the sofa. He was weary and went to bed soon after he roused himself from this short slumber. Pierce remained up for an hour or two (the door between the two rooms was open) and tiptoed about keeping a watchful eye upon his friend. Hawthorne did not seem to be particularly restless in his sleep although he moved somewhat time and again. Between one and two o'clock Pierce crept into the room and stood beside Hawthorne's bed studying the worn face of the sleeping man. His eyes were closed and his posture was natural. Again, between three

and four o'clock, Pierce returned to the room and was surprised to note that Hawthorne had not changed his position in any respect. He placed his hand upon the sleeper's forehead. Hawthorne was dead.

As quietly as this did the solitary man achieve that haven where his solitude might not be disturbed.

New York City.
November, 1926—
March, 1927.

FINIS

A CHECK LIST OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S BOOKS

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Twice Told Tales, 1837
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Journal of an African Cruiser (edited), 1845
Mosses From an Old Manse, 1846
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